A CLASSIC CLINTON SMEAR—MICHAEL KINSLEY

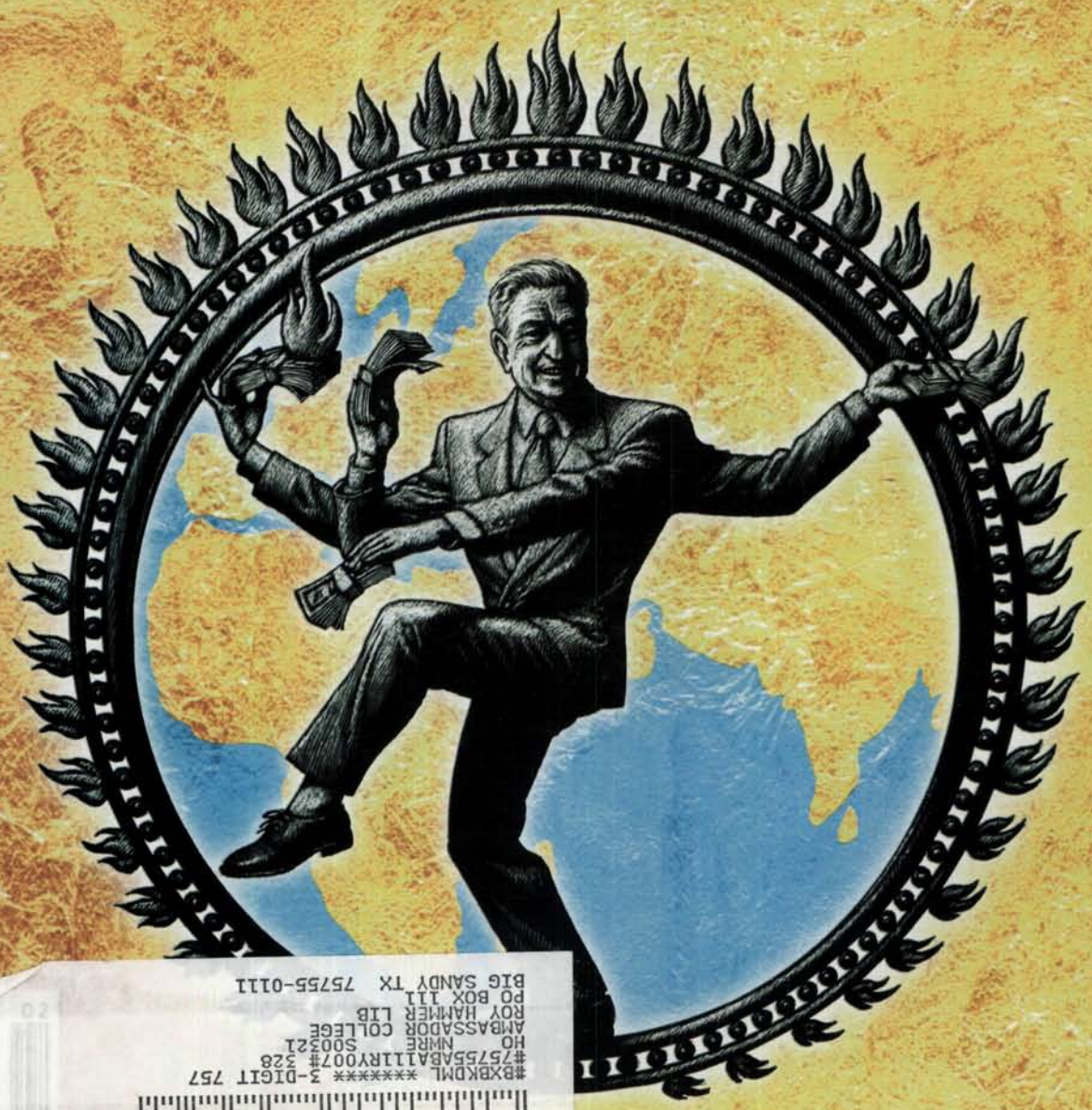
JANUARY 10 & 17, 1994 · $2.95

THE NEW REPUBLIC

MR. SOROS'S PLANET

A TRIP WITH THE BILLIONAIRE SPECULATOR, GEORGE SOROS, AS HE TRIES SINGLE-HANDEDLY TO SAVE THE EASTERN BLOC

BY MICHAEL LEWIS



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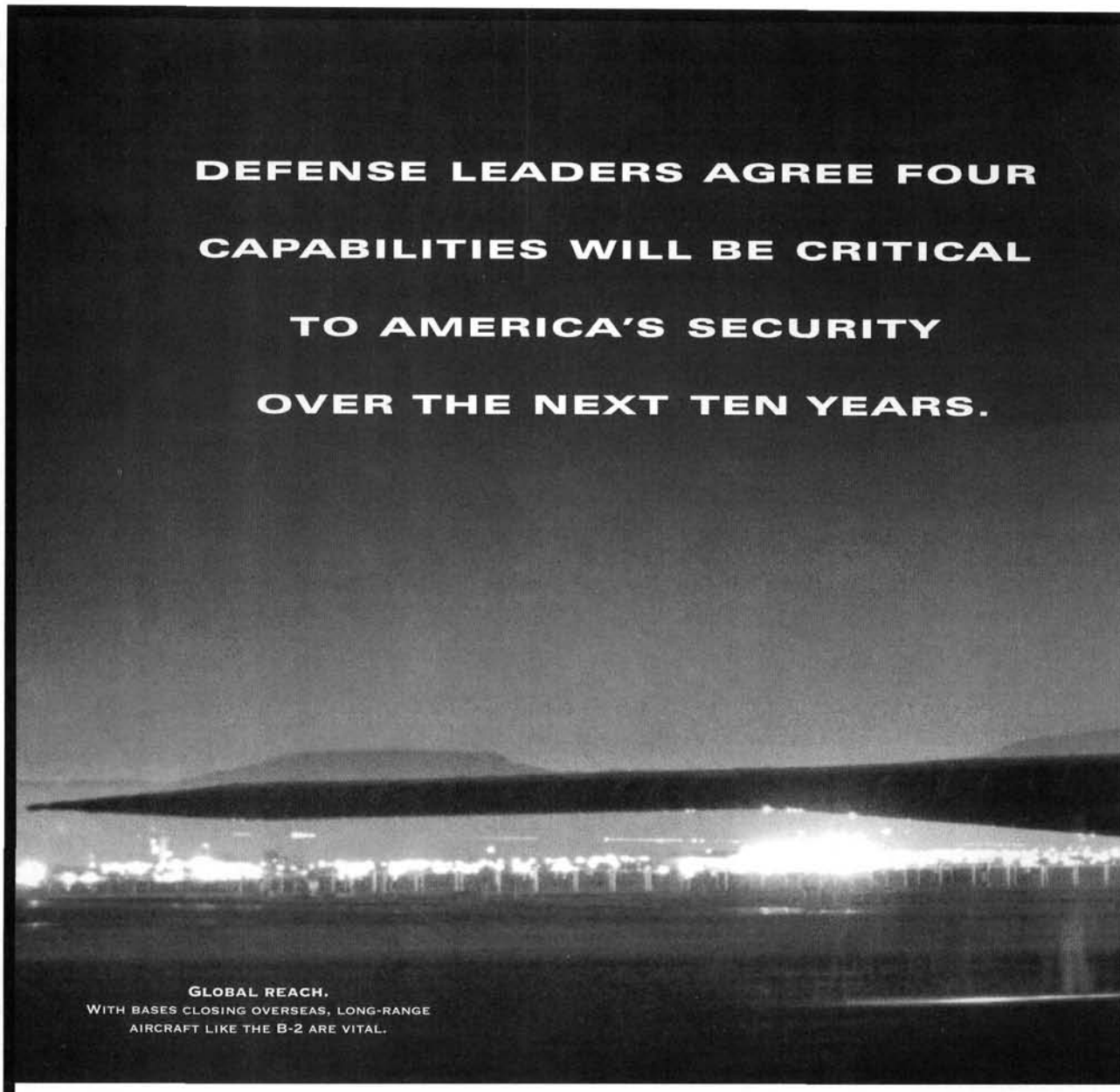
DEFENSE LEADERS AGREE FOUR CAPABILITIES WILL BE CRITICAL TO AMERICA'S SECURITY OVER THE NEXT TEN YEARS.



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TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

F-troop

David Brock's dishonesty announces itself in his very first paragraph. Brock's would-be exposé in *The American Spectator*, "Living With the Clintons," alleges a variety of adulteries by Bill Clinton while governor of Arkansas, continuing through the 1992 election and into 1993. It begins:

"In a remarkable but little-noticed article buried inside the Sunday *Washington Post* four months before the 1992 presidential election, top Clinton campaign aide Betsey Wright said she had been spending the better part of her time since the Democratic National Convention trying to quell potential 'bimbo eruptions.'"

Little noticed? The implication is that Brock has picked up some important but overlooked piece of evidence here. In fact, as anyone who followed the 1992 campaign at all knows, Wright's remark about "bimbo eruptions" was widely noticed and commented upon. Nexis, the electronic media data base, reports no fewer than 324 subsequent references to "bimbo eruptions" in newspapers, magazines, wire services and television transcripts. This includes nineteen in the very paper that allegedly "buried" the original remark.

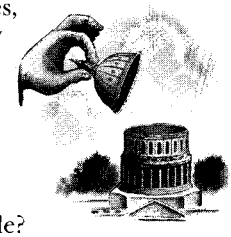
And, by the way, the original *Post* article contained no suggestion by Wright that she had spent "the better part of her time" since the convention on this matter. Brock just made that up.

So that's the first paragraph. In the second paragraph, Brock writes: "The extensive effort to short-circuit such stories, Wright said [in the *Post* piece], included the campaign's hiring of a private investigator to obtain information damaging to the credibility of the women involved, which was then used, presumably, to persuade them to stay quiet." The implication is that the stories were true and Wright was admitting to trying to hush them up. Brock later refers to "the strong-arm tactics acknowledged by Wright."

But Wright acknowledged no strong-arm tactics. The clear point of Wright's remarks was that she was investigating the bimbo stories in order to prove them *false*. This may have been a fool's errand, or Wright may have been lying, but that doesn't give Brock the right to utterly misrepresent her point.

Anyway, those are the first two paragraphs of Brock's piece. You can judge the next 120 or so paragraphs on that basis. These minor matters don't prove the untruth of Brock's major accusations. But they do prove his fundamental bad faith, and that of his editors. Who would believe anything this fellow wrote? Not me. And probably not most other professional journalists. And yet the responsible press has been whipsawed into publicizing Brock's allegations.

Brock's stories come from two Arkansas state troopers who talked to him on-the-record and two others who refused to go on-the-record but whom he cites as authorities (and ultimately names) anyway. Brock raises, ritualistically, the possibility that the troopers might be motivated by dislike of Clinton or hopes to get rich off a book. Then he proceeds as if this disclaimer relieves him of any duty not to be credulous.



Are the troopers believable? Once again, small matters leap out to the honest reader—though not, apparently, to Brock or his editors. These little things don't disprove the more spectacular accusations, but at the very least they establish that the troopers are enthusiastic embroiderers whose uncorroborated word is not worth much.

For example, Brock reports one trooper's alleged memories of Clinton's anger at Michael Dukakis after Clinton's embarrassingly long speech nominating Dukakis at the 1988 Democratic convention. The trooper claims that Clinton called Dukakis "that little Greek motherf----r."

Could be, of course. Except that Brock concludes the anecdote this way: "'Then he [Clinton] refused to endorse him [Dukakis] until a few weeks before the election,' Patterson [the trooper] recounted. Dukakis did not return a call seeking comment." This is not just nonsense but obvious nonsense. Refused to endorse? Clinton had *nominated* Dukakis—remember? —in a speech that was full, indeed famously overfull, of endorsements. Furthermore, a Nexis search reveals (no surprise) a string of later public expressions of support by Clinton for Dukakis, beginning just two days after the famous speech (and fifteen weeks before the election). This naked falsehood makes Brock's faux-scrupulousness about calling Dukakis especially pathetic.

Do you believe that Bill Clinton—"Slick Willie," the consummate charmer, according to his *enemies*—told a trooper who asked him to sign some photographs for the trooper's family, "I don't have time for that shit"? Brock does. I don't. Do you believe that Clinton ever "chuckled privately that he 'never met a tax he didn't like'"? I don't. Do you believe that the Clintons "wouldn't go out to dinner with friends the way you or I would"? Too snobbish, according to one of Brock's troopers. Bob Woodward could probably nail this one down. Pending that, though, is it plausible? Judging from their public behavior during the past year, whatever moral failings the Clintons may have, a reluctance to go out to dinner with friends is not one of them.

Are all the nasty stories retailed by the troopers false? Oh, probably some are true. The point is that the testimony of these patently unreliable sources doesn't make the stories any more likely to be true.

Clinton more or less conceded some previous philandering in his famous February 1992 "60 Minutes" interview. By talking vaguely about problems in his marriage while denying a "twelve-year" affair with Gennifer Flowers—as opposed to an affair of some other duration—he cagily managed to stay just this side of lying (though he spun out of control later on "Nightline" with an uncautious reference to "a woman I didn't sleep with").

I'm not one who holds that the private lives of politicians are nobody else's business. It would bother me greatly if Clinton was still messing around *after* the "60 Minutes" interview—let alone after the election. That would reveal a brutal willingness to deceive the public—way beyond the normal politicians' cynicism—as well as a frightening lack of self-control (what a friend of mine once vividly described, in reference to Gary Hart, as "a kind of incontinence"). If Clinton tried to bribe a trooper to keep quiet, that's obviously very bad, too.

But I don't believe it, at least on the evidence offered. Among other problems, the only story Brock (or the *Los Angeles Times*, which published its own article on the troopers' reminiscences) has about postelection behavior comes from one of the troopers who refuses to go on-the-record. In a comically sleazy note, Brock declares that his troopers "cannot speak authoritatively" on the subject of possible Clinton philandering since he came to Washington. Of course, that is a subject on which they cannot speak *at all*.

What is going on here? In some conservative quarters, resentment of the fact that there is a Democrat in the White House again—in violation of all the seeming laws of history—has become simply pathological. That's part of it. But how did all the rest of us get sucked in?

MICHAEL KINSLEY

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JANUARY 10 & 17, 1994

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WASHINGTON, D.C.
ISSUES 4,121 & 4,122

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THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 210, Numbers 2 & 3, Issue 4,121 & 4,122, January 10 & 17, 1994. (Printed in the U.S. on December 22, 1993.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated Jan. 10 & 17, July 18 & 25, Aug. 22 & 29, and Sept. 19 & 26, 1994) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. The New Republic Advertising Sales Office (212) 702-4882. Yearly subscriptions, $69.97; foreign, $99.97; Canada, $84.97. Back issues, $3.50 (includes postage & handling). © 1994 by The New Republic, Inc. (ISSN 0028-6583). Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, CD-ROM, issue and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Internet mail address: editors@tnr.com Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscribers: Please send all remittances, changes of address, and subscription inquiries to Subscription Service Dept., The New Republic, P.O. Box 602, Mount Morris, IL 61054. For subscription problems call 800-827-1289.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Pepper and salt

To the editors:

In response to Michael Lewis's tale of investor woe ("My Friend Tony," December 6, 1993), I can offer a simple story with profound import to further financial complications.

About five years ago I met a Hungarian national while having breakfast in Manhattan. Being a native New Yorker (and contrary to conventional wisdom), I struck up a friendly conversation with the interesting man in the booth next to me. As we waxed on about the different cultures, he made a very simple yet profound observation about the place settings.

"Your country is actually much more Socialist than mine," he said flatly, sweeping his hand over the condiments. "Look ... salt, sugar, pepper, ketchup, mustard, even little pitchers of cream! In my country, all this would be gone in an instant! And here, it stays all day! You Americans know how to share. Your country is much more Socialist than mine!"

Not that the hills of central Europe breed thieves, but when a collective (no pun intended) people do without for the length of their lives, a little temptation goes a long way.

ROBERT GOLDWITZ
New York, New York

Not so greasy

To the editors:

I am disturbed by Claire Sterling's assertions of rampant checkbook journalism being practiced now by the Western media in Russia ("Source-Greasing," November 15, 1993).

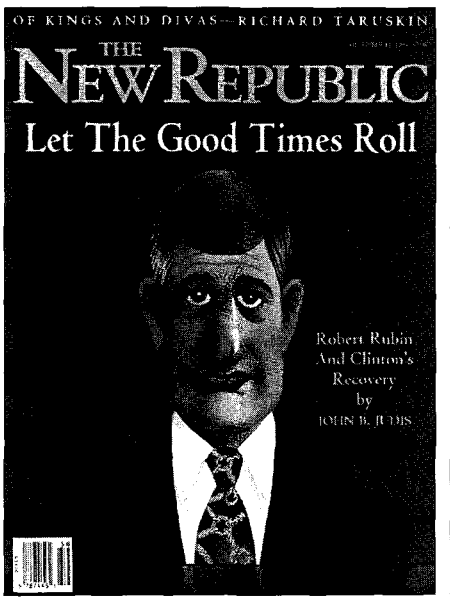
I am a documentary producer who has just returned from nearly two months in Russia. During my stay there I had not one request for a palm-greasing payoff to open what once were closed doors. My experience was quite the opposite. Doors were constantly being opened to our camera, the price simply a commitment to accurately illustrate the realities of the rough road to capitalism.

In Moscow, the once sealed gates of the I.V. Kurchatov Institute of Atomic Energy were opened free of charge by Dr. Semion Malkin, who is desperately attempting to declassify secret technology so that joint ventures can be attempted with the West. Likewise at Chernogolovka outside Moscow, once a major site for chemical and laser weapons development, officials allowed us free rein to witness the uncomfortable realities of the Russian "brain drain" by interviewing scores of scientists packing to leave the country for higher-paying jobs abroad.

Both in Nizhny Novgorad and Chelyabinsk, Oblast Governors Boris Nemsov and Yadim Solovyov allowed us to shadow them and film their meetings, both official and unofficial, for two entire days. Neither they nor their staffs asked for payment in return.

In Yekaterinburg, Boris Yeltsin's hometown and a city trying to fight off the power and violence of several strong mafias, we were given permission to ride along with the region's elite, anti-mafia police on a six-hour late-night patrol. No money changed hands.

Alexander Yermishin, the young



director of the Saratov Aviation Plant, which used to turn out jet fighter planes, showed us around a hangar where his newly privatized company is testing an unusual "flying saucer" shaped commercial aircraft right next to the last military order of cruise missiles. The most we "paid" for this remarkable tour was an agreement to accompany Yermishin on a strenuous hiking spree in a nearby forest.

In Zlatoust, until recently a "closed area" in the Urals, the local KGB officer handed off his loaded handgun to our team, and, at his own expense, gave us free target practice. The target was a bullet-proof vest from a local defense plant that just converted to employee ownership.

Sterling asks, "So what is actually happening in Moscow?" I say there is a new understanding in Russia of the Western press and its power. It may have been the case once when the higher the fee, the better the story. No longer. In my experience, the press is still being used, but this time it is to tell stories that Russians want to hear and broadcast in hopes of a payoff far greater than any one news organization can subsidize. The job of the press, however, remains the same: get it right.

JOEL C. SEIDMAN
Washington, D.C.

Over Hill

To the editors:

I was surprised that Senator Carol Moseley-Braun's response (Correspondence, December 13, 1993) to a sexual harassment charge was to argue that the complainant "never had the courtesy, courage or the honesty to bring her grievance to her employer." I had always supposed that she had taken Anita Hill's side, not Justice Clarence Thomas's, in a similar situation. Apparently I was wrong.

ERIC KENDALL
Los Angeles, California

Go west

To the editors:

William Kittredge's "Free Range" (December 13, 1993) touched upon but did not quite analyze an important distinction regarding public land in the West. Rural Westerners resent the current suggestions for public land reform not so much because they view the public land as belonging to rancher lease-holders, but, in important ways, the leaseholders really do own the land and stand to be deprived of it by the government.

Prior to the Civil War the government viewed the vast area of rural land west of the Mississippi, excluding Texas, as generally unsuitable for settlement. What settlement would occur could utilize the traditional system of either purchase of land from the government or land grants from the states after incorporation into the Union. After the Civil War, however, to encourage the displaced and unemployed to migrate to the West, the federal government gave land outright to those who occupied it for a short required time period.

While successful in attracting settlers to the West, the government granted an amount of land too small for a farmer or rancher to make a living upon. Consequently, a new system was developed in which homesteaders settled in areas near water sources, then grazed their cattle in the surrounding area on land titled to the federal government. Disputes over who was entitled to graze certain areas were settled by stock-growing associations according to the number of homesteads and the respective size of their herds.

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Two types of land ownership resulted. Each ranch possessed title, or fee ownership, over a small area where its water source and ranch houses were located. From there the ranch controlled the remainder of its range, which, although titled to the federal government, it owned to the extent that it could exclude all other stock-raisers from that range. This right could be sold or was inheritable.

Of concern to the ranchers, however, was the fact that their rights on the federal land could be diminished by the entry of miners or other homesteaders. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 stopped further homesteading in recognition of the threat it posed to the rights of the existing ranches. Additionally, the federal government began to take some direct management role in the land in an effort to compensate ranchers for some of the loss of control they had prior to the act.

It is hardly surprising then that federal land reform is resisted in the West. The federal government proposes to seriously alter, or eliminate, property rights that have existed for a century, without compensating the owner of that property at all.

PATRICK T. HOLSCHER
Casper, Wyoming

Kiddie-porn again

To the editors:

I did not think that THE NEW REPUBLIC's libertarian perspective would provide a safe haven for child pornographers (Notebook, December 6, 1993). But that will be the effect of your defense of the Reno Justice Department's position on this issue. The Child Protection Act does outlaw "the lascivious exhibition of the genitals or pubic area." This means that the criminally lascivious motive is not that of the child, who is the *victim* of the crime, but that of the individual—the criminal—who uses or makes child pornography.

The Justice Department's brief in the *Knox* case turns the statute on its head by arguing that an illegal act occurs only when the child is acting lasciviously. Does a minor know how to act lasciviously? Congress, when it passed the Child Protection Act in 1984, did not think so. Nor did the Senate, when it passed my resolution on November 4 by a 100-to-0 vote, rebuking the Department for its erroneous interpretation of the Child Protection Act.

The Justice Department's position is in no way "sensible." Moreover, the 100-to-0 vote proves that concerns raised about this misinterpretation of the statute extend well beyond the "religious right." The real scandal is not that President Clinton told Attorney General Janet Reno to get serious about child pornography. Rather, it is his acquiescence in the Justice Department's position while pretending that changes to existing law are needed. The only beneficiaries of this view will be child pornographers whose prosecutions will now be dropped or whose convictions will be thrown out.

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY
United States Senator, Iowa
Washington, D.C.

And another thing

To the editors:

An addendum to the correspondence between myself and Jacob Weisberg (November 15): Weisberg had written ("Kay Bailey Forehead," October 18) that Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison was "director of a bank that failed." She was not. The retreating Weisberg then takes the position that he was referring not to the Fidelity Bank, where Hutchison served as a director, but RepublicBank, where she was general counsel—but not a director.

In fact, Hutchison resigned from RepublicBank in 1981, when it was profitable. The bank was also profitable in 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985. It then encountered financial trouble and was purchased by another bank in 1987. Tying Hutchison to RepublicBank's problems is analogous to tarring John Paul Jones with responsibility for Pearl Harbor.

DAVID C. BECKWITH
Spokesperson for Senator Hutchison
Washington, D.C.

Very meta

To the editors:

John W. Bush (Correspondence, December 13) says that he is a "theological minimalist" who believes only that "there must have been some transcendent act of creation, because there is no apparent reason why there had to be a universe in the first place." But an act of creation requires a creator, yet there is no apparent reason why there must have been a transcendent creator to perform a transcendent act of creation. A theological minimalist must therefore believe in a metatranscendent act of creation to create the transcendent creator. And also, of course, in a metametatranscendent act of creation to create the metatranscendent creator, and so on ad infinitum. So it seems that a theological minimalist might better be characterized as a theological maximalist. Or, better yet, as an atheist.

HENRY COHEN
Baltimore, Maryland

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

The Coming Scandal

[Today's guest column is by ***M. William Salganik.*** *Mr. Salganik, a former education writer, edits the Perspective section of the* Baltimore Sun. *His article previously appeared in the* Sun *on December 11, 1993, and is reprinted with that paper's permission.]*

There's a scandal coming in education. I don't know where or when, but I know the general area that will be involved: the hiring of private, for-profit companies to deliver educational services.

I'm not saying privatization is necessarily a bad thing; it's a good idea for some schools and some services. Baltimore is leading the way in this area with a private firm operating nine city schools and another conducting some remedial classes. It's to the credit of the school board and Superintendent Walter G. Amprey that they're willing to try new ways of doing things. But it's an area where the rules are being made up as the game is played, and there are bound to be some fouls called.

First, some history. There was another flurry of interest in privatization just over 20 years ago. It combined two themes we can see in education now: an emphasis on accountability for money spent and the idea that private business can be more innovative and more efficient than big school bureaucracies. The confluence of these two ideas was "performance contracting" — companies would teach and would be paid according to how much kids learned.

More than 100 schools around the country tried performance contracts during the 1970-71 school year. Companies large and small rushed in — as large as Westinghouse, as small as a new company formed by football star Fran Tarkenton. The cover story in *The American School Board Journal* in October 1971 was "Almost Everything You Need to Know About Performance Contracting."

Soon, everything you needed to know about performance contracting consisted of this: First, a federal evaluation found that performance contracts worked no better than traditional programs. Second, there was evidence of contractors cheating. In addition to general shoddy work in a number of schools by some bottom-line-oriented contractors, skeptical members of the teachers' union in Providence, Rhode Island, found a contractor teaching parts of the standardized test that was to be used to evaluate progress and determine payment.

What are the rules for bidding? For evaluating programs? For disclosure of personal interest? For whether city school officials can do consulting work for a firm which is doing business in the city?

Education panaceas have a curious resilience. Ideas come along, fail, drop from sight for a while and then reappear. When they do come back, no one seems to remember why they didn't work before.

Are we doomed to repeat the failures of 1971? Maybe. Let's look at the two problems with performance contracting: ineffectiveness and the potential for corruption.

■ Effectiveness: The education bureaucrats aren't getting the results we'd like, but is there reason to think private companies can do better? Private companies have their errors and inefficiencies, too. (I've even seen some at *The Baltimore Sun.*) And while some companies are better than others, there's no particular reason to think a firm run by a Hall of Fame quarterback will do better than a school system run by somebody with a doctorate in education.

But ultimately, this isn't a question that calls for a "reason to think" answer. It calls for an empirical answer, but educators and school officials are moving ahead without one. Mayor [Kurt] Schmoke has expressed some concern that the privatization experiments in Baltimore haven't had a rigorous, independent evaluation. Yet city school officials are talking about expansion, and other cities — this week, Washington — are interested in buying in.

■ Corruption: Given the millions of dollars at stake and the lack of clear rules, some seems inevitable. In Baltimore, there hasn't been competitive bidding, or even informal seeking of competitive proposals. The stock of Educational Alternatives, Inc., the company running the nine "Tesseract" schools, fluctuates wildly with news: down 10 percent last week when the Baltimore Teachers Union filed suit challenging the EAI contract, up almost as much on Wednesday when D.C. schools expressed interest and Baltimore's Board of Estimates approved EAI contracts at two more schools.

I'm certainly not saying there's anything ethically wrong in Baltimore. But what are the rules for bidding? For evaluating programs? For disclosure of personal interest? For whether city school officials can do consulting work for a firm which is doing business in the city?

Unless such questions are answered clearly and soon — in Baltimore and in any other school district looking at privatization — there *will* be a scandal. And if privatization fails the corruption test, we'll never get to find out if it passes the effectiveness test.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1994 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JANUARY 10 & 17, 1994

DON'T PANIC

The newly elected Russian parliament hasn't even convened yet, but neo-fascist Vladimir Zhirinovsky is already having an influence on Russian—and American—government policy. His strong showing in the vote was a "protest against poverty," said President Boris Yeltsin, who earlier had announced his decision to extend $120 million in subsidized credits to inefficient tractor factories. Though Yeltsin insisted he would stay the course on reform, further inflationary measures are being contemplated in the name of helping an economically battered public. These steps will receive, it seems, the blessing of a somewhat rattled Clinton administration. According to Strobe Talbott, the State Department's envoy to the region, Russia needs "less shock and more therapy." The International Monetary Fund, under heavy administration pressure, has signaled that it might relax the inflation and deficit targets the Russian government itself pledged to meet.

Is this wise? Granted, the Zhirinovsky phenomenon is, as the administration says, a "wake-up call" for Russia's reformers and their more complacent friends in the West. The nostalgia that many beleaguered Russians feel for the days when law and order reigned on their streets and the Soviet Union was a feared empire may be more potent than Western optimists dared guess. These emotional currents must be taken seriously, not least in shaping our defense budget and those of the other NATO powers.

But the Russians' problems can and should be kept in perspective. To begin with, as a description of what Russia has been through since 1991, "shock therapy" is only a half-truth. Yeltsin has ducked and weaved several times, accelerating reform, then slowing it. The misery that threatens the transition from communism to democratic capitalism has been caused as much by the Russian president's caution as by his radicalism. Inflation not only plays havoc with incomes and investment; it feeds speculation, and hence the mafias against whom Zhirinovsky railed. Yet inflation has been compounded by past doses of the same remedy Yeltsin is now prescribing: infusions of easy credit for the rust-bucket manufacturing sector.

Despite all this, Russia's rebound is impressive. The average monthly wage is now $87 per month—not much, but still eleven times what it was in January of 1992. Some 42 percent of all employed Russians now work for the private sector; 15 percent did so in 1991. Russia has a trade surplus and $7 billion in foreign reserves. This progress is largely thanks to the advice of the IMF, everyone's favorite whipping boy.

The news is not entirely gloomy on the political front, either. Many of the military rank and file did vote for Zhirinovsky. But the high command seems firmly loyal to Yeltsin and, for the time being at least, willing to limit its neo-imperial ambitions to policing the former Soviet republics to Russia's south. There is little evidence that Zhirinovsky's voters put his name in the ballot box because they are eager to go to war to recover Alaska. Yeltsin now has a constitution that allows him to distance himself, if need be, from reformers who do his bidding; to control foreign policy; and to govern with far less sniping from parliament. The pro-reform Russia's Choice party is still the largest bloc in parliament.

Yes, there are worrying parallels between Russia and Weimar Germany—a crisis in national pride, a red-brown opposition, an isolated elite, a near worthless currency. It is also true that the cause of reform asks a premodern political culture to accept simultaneous and stunningly swift pro-Western revolutions in politics, economics and moral values. But this is all the more reason not to lose our nerve—whether in facing the prospect of possible renewed Russian assertion abroad or in waging the battle against Russian inflation. Though Russia deserves Western help in establishing a stronger safety net for those who have lost their jobs, propping up failing factories as a sop to Zhirinovsky's voters will ultimately be self-defeating. The Clinton administration may be powerless to stop such backsliding, but it should definitely not encourage it. Confronted by those who question the legitimacy of the democratic capitalist revolution, there is no alternative to making the case for that revolution, clearly and compassionately—but unapologetically. Political and economic freedom have won many converts in Russia; these people look to the U.S. for affirmations of faith in democratic capitalism. Appeasement was no answer to Germany's fascists in the 1930s. And it's no answer to Russia's fascists today. •

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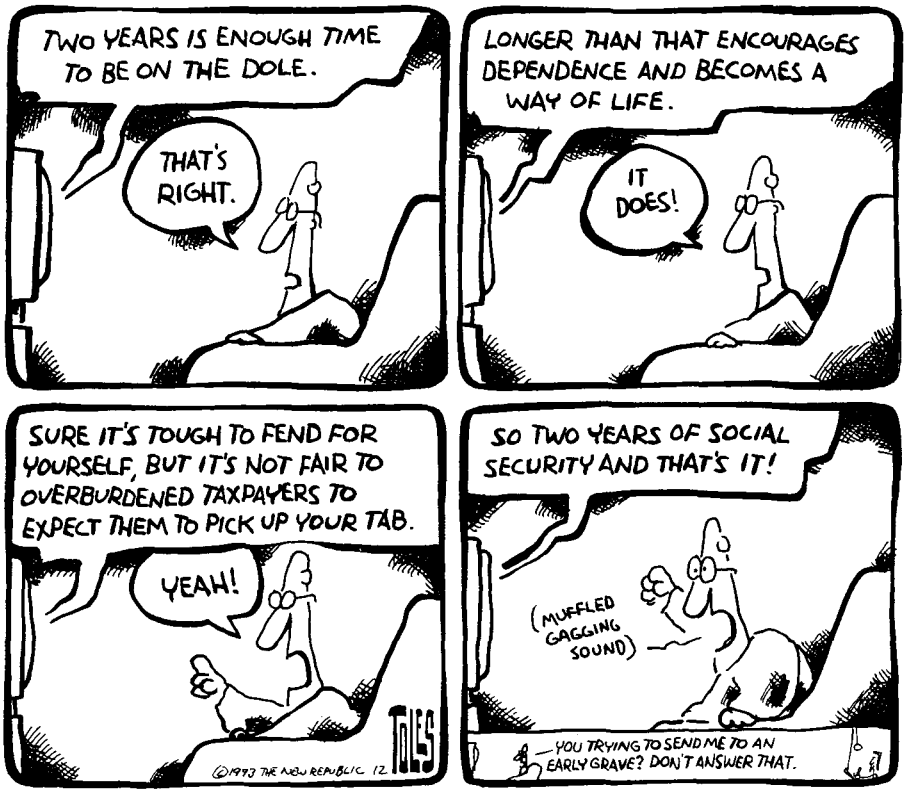
NOTEBOOK

HARRUMPH, HARRUMPH: Yes, we know we've written about it in this issue (even put it on the cover) (see "F-troop," TRB, page 4 and "Living With Bubba," page 11), so we're hardly in a position to get on a very high horse. But that's no reason we shouldn't get on a medium-sized one. The way in which David Brock's tabloid sleaze infiltrated the mainstream media is truly sickening. We doubt whether most of his allegations are true. But even if they are, they're of no relevance to Clinton's public duties. Yes, the allegations of womanizing involved state officials, i.e., troopers. But virtually anything a governor does—going to the restroom, picking up his kids from school, cracking off-color jokes—involves these troopers, who are obliged to stay with him all day, every day, throughout his term. That doesn't make any of these things relevant to public debate or fit for newspapers to print. And yes, Clinton's calls to the troopers could feasibly have been improper, if he warned them against going public with their charges. But on this, the press has the president in a vicious trap. The only reason Clinton might have felt obliged to call the troopers is because the mainstream press might run its stories. The press thus threatens to run a story; and if the president tries to stop it, or even investigate it, his actions become a further excuse to run the piece. The truth is, the only possible reason for this sleaze is financial gain and political malice. (We note that every single woman involved in the story has denied liaisons with the president.) And the cost is the legitimate, fast evaporating privacy of public officials. We say this, heaven knows, not out of blind loyalty to this president, nor out of disdain for proper investigative reporting, but out of some modest belief in journalism. If Brock wants to make his name as something more than a low-level soft-porn merchant, he might start working on the Whitewater Development Corporation. Now that's a story.


TWO YEARS IS ENOUGH TIME TO BE ON THE DOLE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
LONGER THAN THAT ENCOURAGES DEPENDENCE AND BECOMES A WAY OF LIFE.
IT DOES!
SURE IT'S TOUGH TO FEND FOR YOURSELF, BUT IT'S NOT FAIR TO OVERBURDENED TAXPAYERS TO EXPECT THEM TO PICK UP YOUR TAB.
YEAH!
SO TWO YEARS OF SOCIAL SECURITY AND THAT'S IT!
(MUFFLED GAGGING SOUND)
YOU TRYING TO SEND ME TO AN EARLY GRAVE? DON'T ANSWER THAT.
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TOLES

BUSINESS AS USUAL: One of the fascinations of Washington is watching as the political class steadily defines ethical deviancy downward. We're not entirely happy to announce that 1993 ended on a new low, as Representative Glenn English, Democrat of Oklahoma, declared he will abandon his seat in March to become the next head of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. English chairs the House subcommittee that oversees and protects the federal rural electric subsidy program; in that position, he worked with the NRECA to save the program from the near elimination proposed last February by President Clinton. English told *National Journal* that he started negotiating for a job with the NRECA in mid-October—not three weeks after he and the House finished re-authorizing the association's program. Displaying his rather peculiar sense of time, English characterized three weeks as "long after the legislation passed the House." Other members of the House were shocked—shocked!—by English's crassness. "Fellow members are disgusted with this," a senior House aide (unnamed, of course) told the *Journal.*

REINVENTING ENGLISH: "The organizational structure should be extroverted with more 'surface' exposed to the American intellectual, policy and media environment and with more sensing mechanisms for recognizing emerging changes and the implications for our work"—from the United States Information Agency's recently formulated *Streamlining the Bureaucracy Plan*

(Thanks to Stephen Burant, Washington D.C.)

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR: This is a double issue and TNR will not be appearing next week. The editors will spend their week off avoiding vulgar tabloid fare. •

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An exclusive investigative report.

LIVING WITH BUBBA

By David Crock

In late August and in September I spent more than thirty hours interviewing four Arkansas state troopers who had worked for the Clintons over the years. Despite numerous attempts by the Clinton machine to suppress the story, these troopers last week went on the record to describe in detail Bill Clinton's indiscretions with dozens of women. Now, two new state troopers have come forward to pierce the shield of secrecy. What follows is vulgar tabloid fare, ordinarily not worthy of a publication of any journalistic repute. But what the hell. The troopers, Billy Bob Jones and Joe Bob Roberts, are coming forward out of public spiritedness. "We wuz talkin' 'bout that in the squad car just the other day," says Joe Bob Roberts. "That New Democrat talk, it warn't nothin' more than a façade. Clinton don't mean anything but more of the same old Democrat, big government, welfare state solutions. Of course, if he'd a offered us a job pumping gas for one of those government limos, we'd be on board, too."

As the troopers see it, Clinton behaved ungratefully and even rudely toward them after Election Day. "We asked him to autograph pictures for our families," says Jones. "He said, 'I don't have time for that shit.' Then we brought him babies to kiss. He said he hated babies." According to the troopers, Clinton is a man of gargantuan sexual appetites. "He would pick up a baked potato with his hands and eat it in two bites," says Joe Bob Roberts, a stout 6'2" chainsmoker who does not seem easily offended. "He wouldn't even take the tinfoil off. I've never seen anything like it in my life." "He used to plunge his hands into Halloween pumpkins and pull the innards out and smear them all over his face, saying 'God, life is good.' It's like Miss Mamie, the governor's personal masseuse, used to say: 'Lawdy, lawdy. The guvnuh, he sho do like his jelly roll. One day dat jelly 'gwine get him in trouble with the American people.' "

The troopers were closer to Bill than to Hillary Clinton, who, in their telling, comes off as one-dimensional. "She'd be standing around the cauldron," says Roberts. "She'd be saying, 'Double trouble, boil and bubble.' " The troopers also recall the state's Special Olympics, held last year at the governor's mansion. "Mrs. Clinton stormed onto the rear porch," says Jones. "She started yelling, 'Get those fucking retards off my lawn!' I went into the kitchen, and the cook, Miss Emma, turned to me and said, 'The devil's in that woman. Lawdy, if she ever gets a-hold of the nation's health care system, we's sho in a heap a trouble!' "

In private moments with his bodyguards, Clinton would sometimes reveal his insecurities. "The one man I'm scared of is Newt Gingrich," he would tell the troopers. "Now there's a great statesman who can turn this country around! He's got to be stopped!" One time, Clinton and the troopers got to talking on the way back from a political event. "I think it's time to retreat within our borders," he told Jones and Roberts. "If the Communists get the rest of the world, so what? I learned in Vietnam that you can't trust the military!" At that point, the governor brightened. "The one thing that'll destroy 'em—get those peaceniks from the '60s into the State Department! Folks like Mort Halperin. Anthony Lake. Strobe Talbott. They were right about Vietnam. Commissars! That's what we need!"

One day, as the troopers drove him to the Quapaw Towers in Little Rock, home of Gennifer Flowers, Clinton grew pensive. "These last few years have been great," he mused from the back of the Lincoln. "I haven't had this much fun since Ho Chi Minh and I plotted the moratorium! But if I'm going to keep Hillary out of my hair, I've got to give her something big." Suddenly the governor perked up. "I know! Health care! That'll do it! It's a tenth of GNP! So what if we destroy the finest health care in the world? At least I'll get me some of that Hollywood tail!"

The names of the mistresses, some of whom are married and have children, are known to me. But they will not be revealed here, so as not to exploit them more than Clinton already has. I do, however, have their phone numbers. If you subscribe now to *The American Spectator* you can have them, too, free of charge.

WASHINGTON SCENE

STAMPED OUT

By Richard Blow

"It used to be we went to work to earn a living," lamented Dr. Dennis Johnson, a Florida-based management consultant, at last week's conference on workplace violence, hosted by the United States Postal Service. "Today, frequently, we go to the workplace to die and be killed." Audience members—mostly personnel managers from the public and private sectors along with other potential victims from corporate America—nodded their heads and looked like the idea had already occurred to them.

The conference, ominously titled "United States Postal Service Symposium on a Growing American Phenomenon: Workplace Violence," took place at Washing-

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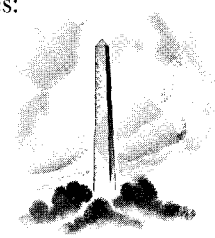
ton's peaceful Willard Hotel. The money-losing USPS and the Willard, an expense account staple, are not a natural coupling, unless you know two things. First, thirty-four postal employees have been murdered by co-workers in the past decade (twenty-six wounded). Second, Postmaster General Marvin Runyon is trying to transform the lead-footed service into a high-tech corporation. (Runyon now calls himself "chief executive officer.")

Dr. Johnson, in the opening speech, argued that workplace violence falls into four categories: (1) robbery, (2) domestic or misdirected "affection," (3) employer-directed violence and (4) terrorism and hate-crimes. He then described the typical office shooter: male, 35 or older, loner, history of military service and/or substance abuse. These people don't take kindly to criticism, and they may function in a "toxic work environment," which could mean they work on an assembly line or their boss is a jerk.



Johnson's presentation, bolstered by videos of crime scenes and alarming statistics, sounded pretty scary. But there was just one hitch: none of the figures he trotted out showed that workplace violence is a "growing American phenomenon." He claimed that 750 people a year are killed at work. His video said 1,400. Runyon argued that "110,000 acts of workplace violence occur annually." But then Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, who spoke at lunch, asserted that 200,000 Americans were "attacked" on the job last year. Elders went on to say that of the 750 people killed at work each year, 75 percent were the result of robbery attempts. If she is right, about 190 people a year are killed for the reasons Johnson hyped. Certainly that's 190 too many, but it is hardly cause for American workers to start eating lunch under their desks.

As the day progressed, however, it became clear that there were other, hidden reasons for the conference. One was to showcase the consultants, psychiatrists and lawyers who have a financial stake in legitimizing the workplace violence "crisis." They were happy to talk about "employee assistance programs" and pre-employment psychological testing. After all, as Karen Smith Kienbaum, a Detroit lawyer, pointed out, "If you have violence in the workplace, you will have legal exposure." Which means that "you need to add to your team a lawyer who is willing to work with you. Because if they're not working with you, they'll be working against you."

The conference also gave its attendees—mostly male, mostly middle-aged, mostly midlevel managers—a chance to explore their angst. These people are generally the ones who have to inform workers of what speaker after speaker called "downsizing." They were clearly concerned that someone they "terminate" might come back the next day with a gun to return the favor. One woman rose to say that her employer, a hospital, had notified more than 100 employees that they would be canned before Christmas. Fearing the worst, the hospital beefed up security.

There was a poignancy to their plight. Domestic roles are unstable; the streets are unsafe. As one speaker put it, "Even the sanctity of the workplace is being challenged." Here was the last place they could safely exert their authority—and now they're losing that, too. If nothing else, the attendees learned that workplace violence isn't their fault. They are just its victims.

"I completely reject the idea of employer-driven violence," assured Dr. Michael Mantell, a psychologist who couldn't help but mention his recent appearance on "Oprah Winfrey." Present at the aftermath of a McDonald's shooting, Mantell spoke of seeing blood mixed with ketchup. "We as a society have to join hands," he warned, "or we're going to see more blood and ketchups." Later, he told the audience to "treat your employees the way you'd want them to treat you." Mantell then paused to give people a chance to write this down, which they did.

The panelists all argued that the best way to avoid killing sprees is to avoid hiring nutcases—and if they do slip through the suggested layers of psychological screening, to know how to fire them. (One tip: don't order them to clean out their desks by 5 p.m.) Other advice, which managed to ignore the effects of multiple layoffs, the monotony of labor, etc., wasn't exactly sympathetic. Or helpful. One panelist suggested a "reasonable degree of employee empowerment." Another called for "stress inoculation testing." Elders urged managers to "reach" their employees "through your concern for their children." For such wisdom, Runyon rewarded the surgeon general with two sets of commemorative stamps.

After a while, the conference began to drag and some attendees appeared to grow restless. At one point Mantell raised the issue of whether Americans are a "bitchy, disgruntled, whining people." To which the man next to me rolled his eyes and muttered, "Screw him."

RICHARD BLOW is managing editor of *Regardie's*.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

YOU'RE FIRED

By Fred Barnes

On the subject of Defense Secretary Les Aspin, conventional wisdom at the White House was firmly set by early November: Aspin was a walking dead man. How did everyone know, junior staffers and minions included? A signal was the handling of a letter to President Clinton from twenty-five Republican House members who wanted Aspin fired for "inexcusably poor judgment in his handling of the events in Somalia." This was political grandstanding, and the nor-

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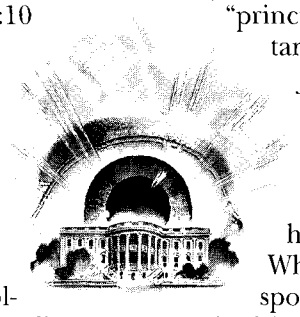
mal procedure was to tell the Republicans to buzz off. So NSC officials drafted a letter saying roughly that. It was never sent. Instead, the White House dispatched a note, signed by Clinton, to GOP Representative Sam Johnson of Texas, asking for support of "our new policy in Somalia." There was no defense of Aspin, not even a mention.

Aspin was oblivious. Though he and the president discussed resignation in early December, Aspin wanted to stay. And since Clinton wasn't explicit, he thought this was a possibility. To better his chances, Aspin cranked up a campaign to rehabilitate his public image. He scheduled an appearance at a press breakfast hosted by Godfrey Sperling of the *Christian Science Monitor*. He invited journalists, including me, to breakfast at the Pentagon. My one-on-one session was on December 14. Aspin was hardly ebullient, but he said he planned to stay indefinitely. Later that day he and Clinton discussed resignation again, more explicitly this time. Still, Aspin held out hope. "His last bit of denial," as one Aspin aide put it, wasn't wiped away until December 15, when the White House called to say he should resign that day. At 3:30 p.m., he signed a letter of resignation. At 5:10 p.m., Clinton announced Aspin's departure.



The president had lost confidence in Aspin months earlier. Shortly before Thanksgiving, he summoned Mack McLarty, the White House chief of staff, and asked for a list of possible replacements for Aspin. The name of Bobby Ray Inman, retired admiral and former spook, turned out to be high on the list. Clinton had conferred with Inman on foreign policy, defense, intelligence, the budget, etc., earlier in November. The meeting, unrelated to the search for a new defense secretary, turned out to be pivotal. Clinton was impressed by Inman, sensing he was everything Aspin wasn't. The president once described Aspin to an associate as "a man with 1,000 brilliant questions" but few answers and no plan of action. Inman seemed to have more answers than questions. And he might bridge the gulf between the White House and the military brass, a task Aspin had failed to accomplish.

In discussions involving Clinton, Vice President Al Gore and McLarty, Inman's name cropped up often. Colin Powell's didn't. Powell had retired on September 30 after two terms as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A federal rule bars a military man or woman from becoming defense secretary until ten years after retirement (Inman retired in 1982). In Powell's case White House officials figured Congress would waive the rule. But Clinton and his aides didn't want Powell. "They're terrified of him," says a White House official. "He's too independent." As JCS chairman he was such a thorn in the White House's side that some officials argued against awarding him the Medal of Freedom at retirement. The president went ahead and awarded the medal. Inman, while no marshmallow, was preferable. Clinton called him in early December and chatted for nearly an hour. On December 14 he invited Inman to the residence for a ninety-minute talk. The next morning, Clinton formally offered him the Pentagon job.

What doomed Aspin? It wasn't his occasional policy clashes with the White House. True, he lobbied unsuccessfully to keep the American ship carrying lightly armed American soldiers from proceeding to Haiti last October. The ship went ahead and the troops were blocked by an armed mob from going ashore, an embarrassing setback for the administration. Aspin was also leery of expanding the American military mission in Somalia. In fact, the decision to approve a United Nations plan for subduing warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed was never "vetted" at the Pentagon, an official insists. Nonetheless, Aspin was blamed when eighteen U.S. Rangers were killed while hunting Aideed. Aspin had turned down a request for more tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles in Somalia. They probably wouldn't have saved the Rangers, but Aspin was pilloried anyway. When he went to the Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington to visit wounded survivors of the Somalia ambush, some of their families refused to meet with him.

Aspin's style aggravated the White House. A keen analyst, he lacked the temperament for the job. At "principals-only" meetings—Aspin, Powell, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, CIA Director James Woolsey, national security adviser Anthony Lake, U.N. Ambassador Madeleine K. Albright—he drove others crazy by refusing to take a firm position. "He won't say anything unless he's fully prepared and feels he's mastered the material," says an associate. When asked for a verdict, he would often respond by asking more questions. "That Socratic bullshit only goes so far," the associate says. He was also faulted for not reining in Powell, especially on using American forces in Bosnia. Aspin neither challenged Powell's strong opposition nor tried to muzzle him.

Small mistakes got Aspin in hot water with Clinton. When the Navy leaked the story that women sailors would be assigned to combat ships, the president was caught by surprise. Angry, he called Adm. Frank Kelso, the chief of naval operations, and asked if sailors' wives might be upset. Clinton thought this decision was to send women to sea for the first time, and was being made without his participation. In truth, women were already serving on noncombat ships. "You had an uninformed president who'd been surprised," says a Pentagon official. "You don't ever want to surprise them, especially when they're uninformed."

Clinton was surprised again when Aspin announced American food drops over Bosnia would halt. Aspin based this on a casual comment by Powell at their regular morning meeting. What Powell had said was that the flights would pause briefly to iron out operational glitches. But Aspin exaggerated this in talking to reporters. His aides succeeded in persuading some to drop the story. But *The Washington Post* the next day proclaimed an "indefinite suspension" in the humanitarian flights. As a result the president contradicted Aspin publicly and declared that the flights would continue.

Face time with Clinton became a rare occurrence for Aspin. The president attends principals-only sessions

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infrequently. One of Aspin's goals was to make the president comfortable around military people, and vice versa. So he often proposed appearances at which Clinton could mingle with them. The first was a visit aboard the *Theodore Roosevelt*, an aircraft carrier. The visit went well—until press accounts played up sailors who sneered at Clinton's lack of military experience and draft avoidance. After that, Aspin had difficulty persuading White House schedulers to put military events on the president's calendar. When the president asked for a briefing on North Korea by the new JCS chairman, Gen. John Shalikashvili, he had to wait three weeks for it to happen. This was too late to prevent him from misstating U.S. policy on the country's nuclearization.

Aspin bailed Clinton out, explaining that the United States wasn't about to go to war with Kim Il Sung. But damage control wasn't what Aspin had been hired for. Given his semihawkish background—pro-contra, pro-Desert Storm—he was supposed to protect Clinton from attacks on the right. But rather than blunt Republican swipes, Aspin provoked them. Nor did he defend Clinton's policies forcefully on T.V. Gradually the president began to see Aspin as a liability. He had to go, but the White House tried to cushion the blow. "I think Les Aspin did an excellent job," McLarty said on "This Week with David Brinkley." Then why is he leaving? McLarty ducked that question. •

Words and the Bosnians.

A WINTER'S TALE

By Slavenka Drakulić

A mulberry tree in my yard is covered with ice, its tiny twigs forming a fine lace on my window. Snow in Vienna still has its innocent white color. Christmas is in the air.

I am sitting at my table, reading newspapers that I bought at the train station. This morning, I am reading an article in the Bosnian daily *Oslobodjenje* about food rations in Sarajevo: 150 grams of bread daily per person, 6.5 grams of potatoes, six grams of rice. And as I read these numbers, I become aware of the slice of bread I am holding in my hand. I look at it, as if I see it for the first time: How much is 150 grams? Could it be just one slice, like the one I am now reluctantly chewing? Or is 150 grams two, or maybe three slices? And if so, what can one do with that? I am almost tempted to get up and put the piece of bread on a scale, but then I give up. The exercise would be pointless. How could 150 grams ever be enough?

Then I remember that I wanted to cook potatoes for lunch today—only as a side dish, of course. But as I fix my gaze on the text, 6.5 grams of potatoes is no longer abstract—it is absurd. It can't be even a single potato, as I imagine a plate with it in front of me, not a single one. In *7,000 Days In Siberia*, his memoir of life in Stalin's gulag, Karlo Stajner wrote: "We got 600 grams of bread, tea and nine grams of sugar today." I put the newspaper down and look at my table. There is butter, milk, jam, one egg and a cup of coffee. I like to drink strong espresso in the morning. This morning, however, my espresso tastes different. I know that I am not in Sarajevo, but today, looking at snow falling and thinking about bread, somehow I am there. Or, at least, I feel that I am not completely present here.

When I was a child, we used to get packages from our relatives in America. They would send us beautifully smelling soaps and cocoa, pink chewing gum, silk stockings, razor blades, delicious chocolates and cans of instant coffee. I used to wonder what life would look like in a country of such richness. But then I did not wish to be an American. Now I wish just that. Or to be a Swede, perhaps an Austrian, a citizen of any country where there is no war, where people decorate their Christmas trees, have a family dinner and give nice little presents to each other. But I am from the bloodstained Balkans. And even if Croatia is not quite "there" (which is, at least, what we Croats would like to believe), millions of fine threads link me: language, home, relatives, friends, news. The difference between me and any Viennese citizen is that I can't forget all that.

I am also a writer. Not long ago, I wrote about the coming of winter in Bosnia, about a need to do something to stop the carnage. But reading about rations in Sarajevo only makes me aware of my own failure: it is impossible for me to write about the second winter of dying, hunger and cold, for whatever I write is not going to change a thing. Besides, write for whom? For the politicians? For them, the case is more or less closed. For the international news media? For them, everything has already happened. What story could rival all that has taken place: concentration camps, mass rapes, the suffering of children, the bombing of the Mostar Bridge? The world has seen it all before, meticulously documented by countless T.V. cameras and described by millions of words. The world has even seen live transmissions of death, like the one recently on "Nightline," when two people in Mostar died in front of the T.V. cameras, one of them a child. What more can one see?

No one is innocent regarding what is going on in this war. Everyone knows—we all do. Very few people can say that their work has made a difference. On the contrary, there is a growing business centered around Sarajevo and Bosnia, and, sadly, the limelight is too often on the participants, not the public. There are lots of books, theatrical productions, documentaries. Bernard Henri-Levy, a French philosopher, made the film *Sarajevo*. Susan Sontag staged Beckett's "Waiting for Godot." Jenny Holzer printed the cover of *Suddeutsche Zeitung* magazine with blood donated by refugee women. I

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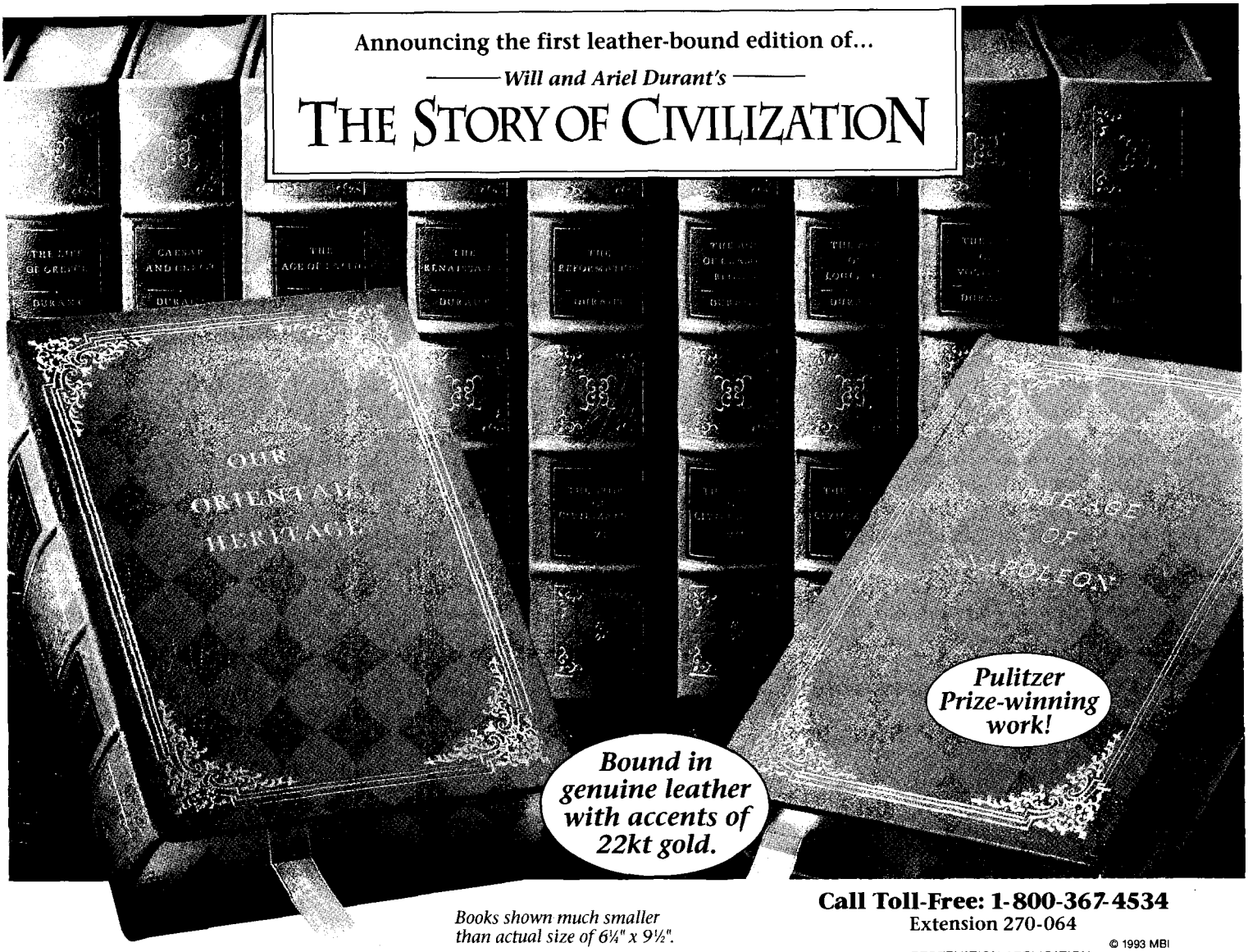

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don't doubt their good intentions. All I say is that if attention and understanding alone could save Sarajevo, then it would have been saved long ago.

As I sit at my table on a quiet, ordinary winter day, I feel helpless for the first time. My words—any words—have no real meaning. I am sick and tired of them. Finally, all we have achieved with words is to establish Sarajevo as a metaphor for tragedy. So what? Are people there going to suffer less of cold because of our good intentions? Will it help them survive, if they get 150 grams of bread? I doubt it, and this doubt, like an acid, is eating me from the inside. I can write about the war as long as I believe in the power of communication and in my own moral right to do it. But today, thinking of bread and potatoes, I feel I do not believe in that power any longer. I somehow have used all my words, given to me as a writer, to make people understand pain, fear and suffering. With the coming winter in Bosnia, I am afraid that my words would just melt away, like this first snow falling over Vienna.

SLAVENKA DRAKULIĆ, a Croatian writer, is author of *The Balkan Express: Fragments from the Other Side of War* (W. W. Norton).

EURO DISNEY POSTCARD

TRAGIC KINGDOM

By Jennifer Allen

Past graffitied walls lining the train tracks, past suburban swing sets, past industrial parks, barren trees, silos, farmlands, in a place where nearly 2 million soldiers died in World War I, lies Main Street, U.S.A. This is Euro Disney's main drag. This is where the music begins and never ends, escorting us now and forever: " 'Tis the Season," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," "Frosty the Snowman." The azaleas are not in bloom. The water fountains reek of chlorine. This is the *basse saison.* Low season. Cold season. Current temperature: 5 degrees Celsius. The pavement everywhere is wet. The woods are sleeping. Literally. Direct translation of Sleeping Beauty—*Château de la Belle au Bois Dormant.*

"Let's go to the Caribbean!" I shriek, skipping off to *Les Pirouettes du Vieux Moulin*, thinking this is the Pirates of the Caribbean. "What are you doing? That's a restaurant!" cries my mother, who is French. "No, it's not!" I scream, running in line, discovering that the structure is in fact a windmill, and that nearby Alice's Curious Labyrinth is closed for winter, and *sugared* popcorn is for sale everywhere and I am not at the Happiest Place on Earth after all, but at some strange, cruel illusion of it, where there is no Matterhorn, no squeaky, musty, dinky-rink, pre-Hollywood special effects rides, no Country Bear Jamboree.

"The only *dommage* is the weather," says Serge, a man with his wife and two very small Mickey Mouse-covered children. Serge himself is wearing a Buffalo Bill Show cowboy hat, his favorite attraction so far, he says, explaining it as a show where Père Noël fights for justice in the West. Serge came here with Intel, his company, on discount, adding that a lot of other companies are here today on discounts as well. His wife, Laurence, a Moroccan, says the French have a problem with Euro Disney. "It's because they keep asking themselves, 'Why couldn't we do it?' " she says. "They're just upset they couldn't do it themselves."

Do it themselves? Bilingual drunken pirates? Bilingual crystal ball, Haunted Mansion heads? Seven bilingual dwarfs?

Not needing any translation is the cost of trinkets for any ride you possibly could have ridden or walked past or even missed in your time here. For instance, once you have exited Pirates of the Caribbean there is a shop you have to pass through on your way through Adventureland: swashbuckling swords, 30 ff; captain's hooks, 20 ff; guns, 55 ff.

Three teenage French boys are pulling shotguns off the racks. "Christmas presents?" I ask. "*Chouette,*" one says, meaning "hip," as he holds the barrel up against the temple of his friend's head. The boys are here with their families on a military discount.

The boys walk away singing the Pirates theme song, and it isn't long before my mother and I are singing along, too, singing to whatever song currently bombards us as we search through the fake sage, trying to find out just where exactly this music comes from. It is some T.V. Western theme song that has brought us to this—pawing through plastic leaves—when a security guard named Rahid, with dandruff and sunglasses and an earpiece, asks if he can help us. We're looking for the music, I explain. Rahid is confused. Rahid has worked here since the park opened more than a year ago. Rahid says, "*Mais, c'est normal!,*" meaning it's normal to have a continual sound track blasting wherever you travel, from Frontierland to Adventureland to Fantasyland.

"This smells American," my mother confirms as we enter *Le Chalet de la Marionette*: a fast-food hall disguised as a ski chalet with a ski lift-length line. The man in front of us is on his fourth visit to Euro Disney. His brother-in-law works here. He gets a price reduction. But he would rather be at Vegas; Caesars, to be exact. "*C'est mieux,*" he tells me, "*le vice.*"

"A lot of the French, they don't get the Disney attitude," says Margie from Missouri. Margie is here with a girlfriend, both of them living in France, both of them getting a discount because a friend works at the park. Margie says the mortician at the Haunted Mansion "almost banged me in the face" hurrying her to get on the ride. "It's a very different service attitude," says

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Margie. "It's a big problem. *You're* serving them."

Serving us at *L'Echoppe d'Aladdin*, is Abdelhaj, a Moroccan craftsman who was brought here from Fez by Disney recruiters. Abdelhaj, 33, engraves brass platters eight hours a day, with a one-hour lunch and a fifteen-minute break, six days a week. Abdelhaj has no problem with the Disney attitude; he says he is happy here.

Outside Abdelhaj's Casbah is a women's rest room, with an arabesque archway entrance, where a man stands with a video camera in hand, awaiting his wife's exit. There is the sense here that everything is worth capturing on camera because never again will you be so happy. Never again will you be surrounded by such clean walls, clean streets, clean, happy workers! It reminds us of Red Square. We finally decide this, my mother and I, while waiting in line for sugared popcorn, to the blaring music of "Winter Wonderland." Where is it coming from now, we ask? And at last we spot the source of all stereophonics: situated among the wrought-iron baroque-styled lampposts are several large speakers. "Propaganda," my mother says, paying the popcorn man.

"*Que le monde est petit!*" and "*Come à piccolo il mondo!*' and "*Es ist eine kleine welt!*" and other Fantasyland expressions. This is the grand finale, my mother's favorite ride: It's A Small World. Up at the lookout control panel, under an awning, safe from wind and weather, in a purple cape with a Travolta hair-flip, sits a young man, clapping his gloved hands, mouthing, "It's a Small World After All." Everyone really is happy here. There is no rowdiness. No tipping or rocking of boats. I look back at the faces in the boat behind us, expecting to see just one bored look, and everyone's mouth is open, necks stretched, awed.

"It's so beautiful, I'm going to cry," my mother says, and does.

It's late: 17:20 Euro Disney time. How will they get everyone out? Within seconds, the speakers announce that in ten minutes a celebration will take place in the Town Square. The celebration involves watching the lights light up the archways along Main Street. Everyone stands around gazing. "Look at them," my mother says, "The French, you see, are cultured, cultured but naive." Immediately after the light show ends, "When You Wish upon a Star" takes control of us and there is a mad rush to hit the stores for one last-minute purchase: Euro Disney tennis balls, 45 ff; golf tees, 60 ff; baseballs, 30 ff. The store is packed, winter coat sleeves precariously rub up against shelves of porcelain paraphernalia, while from somewhere above, loudspeakers yell, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."

At the Disneyland Hotel California Grill, *le chef Goofy* comes by our table, his big head nearly clearing away our wine glasses, his long plastic tongue caught in the bread basket. Bas-relief molding, Christolfe cutlery and "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" all add to our dining experience. "In my country, we eat with our hands, one plate, five or six people—it's much easier," our waiter, Gufed Jama Dirir of Somalia, tells us. "What's the most common question you get asked around here?" I ask. "If I like my job," Jama says. "And I say, '*Yes*,' with a smile."

We eat. Or, as my mother says, being American, we feed. Sleeping Beauty's castle is turned off. We wait for our check. "These are Americans, you can tell, look at them, walking in like they own the place," my mother says, directing my attention to three men striding past our table. "Feet spread, arms swinging, big rears," my mother goes on. And she was right. They were.

JENNIFER ALLEN is a freelance writer.

The origins of Colin Ferguson's hate.

PSYCHO-KILLER?

By Jim Sleeper

In the weeks since the December 7 Long Island Railroad massacre, scores of commentators have cited the diversity of gunman Colin Ferguson's grievances against Caucasians, Chinese, "Uncle Tom Negroes" and "so-called civil rights leaders" to argue that he is a deranged loner. And he is. But none of the reports took into account the most compelling explanation for his malevolent worldview: the dangerous political subculture in which he was steeped. No one, it seems, is willing to entertain even the possibility that Ferguson's delusions were fed by the politics of Crown Heights, Tawana Brawley, the Central Park jogger, the Korean boycott and other cases—a politics of paranoia and rage about white and Asian racist conspiracies that has dominated New York City's black media.

Notes found on Ferguson after the slayings repeat, with an eerie fidelity, the catechism of diverse hatreds taught in recent years by many civil rights leaders, among them Colin Moore, a black Brooklyn lawyer who was a militant defense attorney in the Central Park, Korean boycott and Crown Heights cases. Two days after the Long Island Railroad massacre, Moore revealed in an essay in *Newsday* that Ferguson had in fact approached him in 1991, seeking help in a discrimination case against Adelphi University. Ferguson had professed admiration for Moore's handling of the Central Park case (in which he had charged that the jogger's injuries were trumped-up and that her sex life was to blame). Ferguson "felt we had a lot in common," Moore reported.

Yet for the next seven days, the flood of commentary about the massacre rolled on without a single reference to Moore's astonishing report—a remarkable act of collective denial by the media. If Ferguson had been white

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and had, say, sought help from an attorney for David Duke, we would have heard about it endlessly. Pundits certainly had much to say about the culpability of the militant pro-life movement when an anti-abortion activist killed a doctor at a Florida clinic last year. And when New York's other railroad gunman, Bernhard Goetz, shot four black teenagers in 1984, there was plenty of talk about the "climate of racism" and "white backlash" around Goetz, even though, provoked by four black teens, he hadn't fired indiscriminately at the nonwhite passengers in his subway car. Black activists also cited Goetz's demagogic attorney, Barry Slotnik, as proof that even tormented loners like Goetz aren't really alone in their rage—isolated from the rest of us in some respects, perhaps, but also bound more intimately to our subconscious hatreds and fears than we care to admit.

So why not give similar attention to Ferguson's apparent susceptibility to the delusions of omnipresent white conspiracy that have made their way into black protest politics? Why not consider the influence of rhetoric that freely vilifies members of other groups, elevates rage into a virtue and speaks of fighting the power "by any means necessary"?

New York's most militant black leaders have traded freely in that sort of currency. As the black boycotters of Korean stores called the shopkeepers "yellow monkeys" and their customers "Uncle Toms," attorney Moore prolonged the ugliness by thwarting Mayor David Dinkins's attempts at negotiation. For years, Moore has been spitting hatred at whites, Asians and certain blacks—twice in Ferguson's own Flatbush neighborhood.

"No matter what Colin says, he never looks at an issue as anything but a racial war," says Melissa Pressley, an East Flatbush activist who worked on Moore's first losing City Council campaign in 1991, but eventually became disillusioned with his tactics. While the targets of Moore's wrath are racially varied, no one dismisses him as an "equal-opportunity hater," as pundits did Ferguson. Somehow, everyone understands that a seething resentment of whites is the core around which his subsidiary hatreds revolve.

The same goes for the militant black protest politics that transcends Moore's participation and is often as delusional as anything Ferguson conceived. Were the Central Park jogger's wounds really trumped-up, as Moore claimed? Did New York Attorney General Robert Abrams really masturbate over photos of Tawana Brawley, as her advisers claimed? Did Irish Republican Army rituals really guide Brawley's supposed abduction?

And was it reasonable for black talk radio host Clayton Riley, referring to several white journalists by name during the mayoral campaign, to admonish his listeners to remember Colin Powell's maxim: "Find the enemy, isolate it and kill it"? In a *Village Voice* column two months ago, Nat Hentoff wrote an open letter to WLIB owner Percy Sutton, asking whether he had considered what might happen if a deranged listener took Riley's comments literally. Sutton never replied, and Dinkins appeared for ten minutes every Monday morning on Riley's show throughout the controversy.

By accepting such behavior as normal, by continuing to accord Sutton respect and to call the Brawley advisers and Moore "civil rights leaders," reporters and columnists confer a kind of legitimacy on the fantasies of loners like Ferguson and Goetz. That's why there is something phony, even desperate, about the chorus insisting that Ferguson is utterly isolated in his derangement.

Finally, though, the game is up. Moore has offered to represent Ferguson—at Ferguson's request and, Moore claims, at the behest of unnamed members of the black community. "Whether they agree or disagree with what Mr. Ferguson did," Moore said, "they would like to see that he has proper representation." *Whether they agree or disagree?* And still, no one dares call Moore delusional, for to do that would be to implicate black activism in Ferguson's rage.

There is extraordinary denial at work here. When Louis Farrakhan mentioned Ferguson at a New York rally on December 18, his audience erupted in an ovation that seemed to startle Farrakhan himself. That recalled the Central Park jogger and the Reginald Denny cases, which seemed open and shut until fantasists transformed the perpetrators into martyrs.

Incredibly, that same impulse to shift the racial blame is evident in the Ferguson case, and not only among Farrakhan's enthusiasts or in Moore's remarks. Instead of admitting forthrightly, as Michael Meyers of the New York Civil Rights Coalition does, that "Ferguson's crime was a race crime," mainstream columnists move seamlessly from saying we must not associate Ferguson with black activist histrionics to saying we must associate a few white politicians' post-massacre calls for the death penalty with a general white racist backlash—and they see no contradiction.

Instead of suggesting that some black activists might benefit from a little soul-searching, columnists seem almost eager to expunge race from the discussion. In New York, many local commentators look for signs of a white backlash that hasn't occurred. The entire discussion is skewed by a virtual taboo against talking about what Moore's involvement in this case really means.

What it means is what the black poet Julius Lester wrote in THE NEW REPUBLIC in October 1985, when Farrakhan addressed a rally in New York: "The time has come to stop making apologies for black America, to stop patronizing black America with that paternalistic brand of understanding which excuses and finds reasons for the obscenities of black hatred.... Farrakhan is subtly but surely creating an atmosphere in America where hatreds of all kinds will be easier to express openly, and one day, in some as yet unknown form, these hatreds will ride commuter trains into the suburbs. By then it will be too late for us all."

JIM SLEEPER is a columnist for the *New York Daily News*.

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A trip with George Soros.

THE SPECULATOR

By Michael Lewis

I am acting out a fantasy and so is Eastern Europe. A psychiatrist once told me how dangerous it is to act out fantasies and I am beginning to see what he meant.
—George Soros

I.

The snow was coming down so thickly on the deserted Romanian runway that even after you'd landed you couldn't really see where the sky stopped and the ground began. The feeling gradually subsided that the small rented jet carrying the world's most successful investor, George Soros, was about to become a pile of twisted hot metal. It was replaced by the specter of packs of ravenous wild dogs roaming the tarmac. "They were all over the place the last time I was here," said one of the four female executives present from Soros's charitable foundation. "No," said the woman beside her, "the last time I was here they were gone." "Where did they go?" I asked, squinting through the window into the blur. A few feet forward at the front of the plane Soros looked back and with the air of a Romanian dictator said, "The people ate them for dinner." Then he swiveled back his bouffanted Romanian dictator's head and smiled to himself.

With the plane safely grounded and the wild dogs presumably consumed, the sole remaining anxiety in the cabin was that the tall, dark and troubled correspondent from French television seated beside Soros might finally lose his cool. Over the past week the Frenchman had grown frustrated with his inability to get the pictures to go with his story: BILLIONAIRE JEWISH AMERICAN SPECULATOR SINGLE-HANDEDLY DESTROYS EUROPEAN MONETARY SYSTEM THEN GIVES AWAY A FEW OF THE SPOILS TO MAKE HIMSELF FEEL BETTER. Thus far he had tried to glean sound bites from Soros about the financier's speculations (Soros himself, one of the world's legendary speculators, is no longer much involved in the markets), to obtain footage of Soros posing in the canyons of Wall Street (even while he was in the markets Soros rarely went to Wall Street) and to find ways to illustrate Soros's decadent billionaire's taste for *luxe et volupté* (Soros, though not quite so abstract as he would like to think, barely manages to generate a millionaire's interest in possessions). The day before, the Frenchman pouted for a whole hour while his two-person crew filmed one of the elementary schools in Budapest to which the Soros Foundation provides milk. As he tried to script a hundred or so Hungarian 10-year-olds, you could see him wondering about the consequences for his reputation if, after having been sent with specific instructions to bag a romantic global financial conspirator, he turned up in Paris with a dairy commercial.

The Frenchman nicely illustrated the spirit in which Soros is often approached. Soros's extraordinary role, not only as the world's most successful investor but now possibly, fantastically, as the single most powerful foreign influence in the whole of the former Soviet empire, attracts far more suspicion than curiosity. The sorts of questions asked about him—Does he rig markets? Do central banks pass him inside information? What does he stand to gain out of Eastern Europe?—are rooted in the sense that he is not what he seems. (The questions that occur to one who takes him at face value are not necessarily nicer: Has he been smart or just lucky? Has he now completely lost his grip on reality? Do they make clothes for egos his size?) In the past few years a glittering array of powerful people has suspected him of something. The president of the European Community and representatives of the French and Belgian governments have accused him of orchestrating "an Anglo-Saxon plot" to undermine the French currency. The British government blames him for driving sterling from the European Monetary System. The United States Securities and Exchange Commission leaked allegations that Soros was near the center of Salomon Brothers' attempt to corner the U.S. government bond markets. On about as much evidence, the followers of Lyndon LaRouche have put him at the center of an international drug conspiracy; most recently they were spotted picketing Soros outside an economic conference in Bogotá, which he did not attend.

But the criticism he receives in the places he makes money is mild compared with the heat he takes in the places where he gives it away. In the past three years Soros has spent or committed just shy of $1 billion to Eastern Europe. His portfolio of philanthropy breaks down as follows: two giant grants of $250 million each,

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one to transform the study of the humanities in Russia (training teachers, creating new textbooks, etc.), the other to sustain a new university of his creation—the Central European University—with campuses in Prague and Budapest; $200 million to create and sustain his elaborate network of foundations; $100 million to encourage Russian scientists to stay in Russia; and $50 million in aid to Bosnia. As several publications have put Soros's worth at just shy of $1 billion, one can't help but wonder if the tank is running dry. "Actually I'm not spending as much as I would like to," he said. "Oh, how much is that?" I asked. "One-half of my income," he said, advancing slightly the theory that there are two kinds of famous rich people: those, like Donald Trump, who have much less than is commonly supposed, and those, like Soros, who have much more.

Yet in just about every former Communist country, Soros is identified with whatever outside force seems most sinister to that country's inhabitants. In Hungary he's a "cosmopolitan" (read Jewish) influence; in Romania he's an agent of the Hungarian government; in Slovakia he is Hungarian *and* Jewish; in Russia he's an arm of the CIA or a businessman attempting to corner Russian science. Rabid nationalists in parliaments throughout Eastern Europe rise to denounce him every month or so. Though everyone seems to know who he is—a public opinion poll in Bulgaria put his name recognition at 85 percent—no two people can seem to agree on why he is giving them his money. "The average person thinks he's doing nice things but that secretly he owns half the country," says former dissident Miklos Haraszti, now a member of the Hungarian Parliament. "I have by now a very great number of devoted enemies," Soros admits. To which he adds: "I am much happier with my enemies than I am with my friends."

Soros's two-week trip through Eastern Europe in early November showed how thoroughly he has imposed himself on this reluctant region. He flew first to Prague to settle a financial dispute with Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus and to explain in a speech to the recipients of his money that he detests charity. "Philanthropy goes against the grain," he said, "because our civilization is built on the pursuit of self-interest, not on any preoccupation with the interests of others." He then proved his point by reducing the financing for the Prague campus of his Central European University: "It really shocked the people in Prague. I kept telling them that this was not charity but they didn't believe it."

He flew next to Sarajevo, to witness the opening of a water treatment plant he had built with $2.2 million from his Bosnian relief fund, and which in a stroke eliminated the biggest reason residents had for exposing themselves to sniper fire: the search for fresh water. From Bosnia he traveled to Croatia, where he met with (and publicly expressed his distaste for) President Franjo Tudjman. From Croatia he flew to the CEU's other campus in Budapest, where a regional elite of bright young people, above the squabble of national interests, is meant to be molded. There he hosted a two-day conference of midlevel geopolitical organization men—men entirely unlike himself—including the secretary-general of the alliance, a scattering of other Western diplomats and a dozen or so generals and cabinet officials of Eastern European countries desperate to be admitted to the alliance. I joined him in Budapest and watched with a growing sense of wonder as the bench-warmers of global politics deferred to the billionaire speculator. Then we clambered onto Soros's jet for a six-day tour of his offices in Timişoara, Bucharest, Chişinau, Sophia and Tiranë.

The jet flew us immediately into the snowstorms and uncertainty of Romania. We deplaned in Timisoara, sloshed past the tanks on the deserted runway and then drove through the grim cityscape to The International House Language School. The school is one of a seemingly endless number of educational projects funded by Soros. The stresses in Soros's giving are on youth and information: schools, printing presses, television cameras, e-mail systems, travel grants. In each case the sums are small, but small sums attract a great deal of attention in places with no sums at all. In Timisoara, Soros had spent $600,000, and for this he seemed to have won the attention of the entire city. As we drove, our guide, a wry young Romanian employed by Soros, told us of an incident that had occurred earlier that day. Another Soros foundation worker was riding in a taxi when the driver turned around to her and announced excitedly, "Guess who is coming to Timisoara? George Soros!"

After a thirty-minute drive, we arrived at the language school, housed on the third floor of a Timisoara University building. What I was about to see I'd see so often in the next few days that I would soon grow inured to the sight. The truth is that by itself it did not mean very much. But it meant something. And multiplied several thousand times, as it has been by Soros's money, it may mean more than something. The building looked as though it should be condemned; the people inside were caricatures of hopelessness. Timisoara's university was a crackhouse without the crack. There was neither heat nor electricity. Pallid students with stringy hair stood listlessly in the foyer watching their breath turn into steam. We passed them and climbed the stairs. We glimpsed the inside of neolithic classrooms with light fixtures dangling from the ceilings and chalkboards dangling from the walls. We arrived on the third floor, scraped our shoes and passed through a glass door.

It would have taken a harder heart even than mine to remain completely detached. It was as if this small corner of this black and white city suddenly had been given the gift of color by the touch of a magician's wand. There were new carpets, new furniture, freshly painted walls, a new copy machine and several dozen bright, smiling faces. The wry young Romanian clearly recognized whatever I was sensing. "Like traveling through a time tunnel, isn't it?" he said. A perky Romanian girl—a *perky* Romanian girl!—in an electric red sweater

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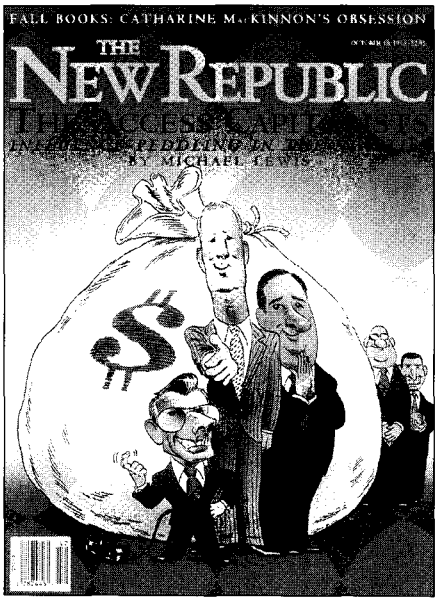

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answered Soros's questions in what sounded like newly acquired English. "Qualitywise," she said, "this is the best school in town, I daresay." When, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Ralf Dahrendorf wrote prophetically that "the key question [in Eastern Europe] is how to fill the gap between the state and the people with activities which by their autonomy create social sources of power," he could have had this place in mind.

In the next five days we would pass through a great many more social sources of power. Each stop would resemble the last. We'd land on some godforsaken runway and walk past an army into an empty VIP terminal—the letters VIP occasionally actually would be over the entrance. There we would be met by between two and fifty journalists. Soros would take a few questions, then leave to meet with the president of the country. He would then visit his foundation offices, invariably new, invariably run by some dynamic local already well on his way to becoming the most powerful nonparty political voice in the country, and convene with his local board members, among whom there seemed always to be a famous dissident, an aging ambassador, a young politician and a lady novelist long pegged by her compatriots to someday win the Nobel Prize. To everyone he met he explained that the foundation had grown so large that it needed a structure. He explained his cryptic new structure. He held a press conference for another pack of as many as 200 journalists. At some point, someone would ask him: "When will our country see light?" And Soros would say, "I like to think in Biblical terms, forty years." Then he raced to the airport to get the jet to the next country.

Really it's an astonishing performance, especially when you consider that three years ago Soros was not much better known in the region than any Wall Street drone. In Bucharest he will explain to a packed press conference that he did not meet with the Romanian president "for lack of time." Late one evening after meeting with the president of Moldova in the morning and the president of Bulgaria in the evening he will turn to me and say, "You see, I have one president for breakfast and another for dinner." And when I wonder aloud from the back of his jet how to illustrate in this magazine the comically complex web of his activities between Germany and China he will swivel around in his seat at the front and say, "Just write that the former Soviet Empire is now called the Soros Empire." Then he will turn back around and smile to himself.

II.

Sometime in late 1980 or early 1981 George Soros had what he now describes as a midlife crisis. The Quantum Fund he managed had, between 1979 and 1981, quadrupled in size from $100 million to $400 million. Soros was a successful man, though nowhere near as successful as he would become over the next decade. "I had to recognize my success," he says. "I had to ask, 'Am I successful or am I the slave of my success?' I have to get some benefit out of it. Up till then I was under a very severe discipline of constant self-examination. Not taking anything for granted. So I relaxed my self-discipline." And, for the only time in his career, he had less money at the end of the year than he had had at the beginning.

Recovering a sense of purpose was something of a problem, for until then his main purpose had been himself. He had—and has—a knack for remaining outside of groups. "Belongs to no clubs or associations," is the line that resonates in his canned résumé. "As I looked around me for a worthy cause," he wrote, "I ran into difficulties. I did not belong to any community. As a Hungarian Jew I had never quite become an American. I had left Hungary behind and my Jewishness did not express itself in a sense of tribal loyalty that would have led me to support Israel. On the contrary, I took pride in being in the minority, an outsider who was capable of seeing the other point of view."

In his three books Soros spins theories of history to explain his actions, but in his life he draws largely on personal anecdotes. The most personal of these—how he avoided the gas chambers of Auschwitz—seems at least to touch on the origin of his philanthropy. Soros was born to a Jewish family in Budapest in 1930. Not long ago, a Budapest newspaper reprinted a story from 1939, which described the 9-year-old Soros marching into the paper's offices to respond to an appeal for aid to Finland after the Russian invasion. From time to time Soros sends a chill through an audience by announcing that he has "carried some rather potent messianic fantasies with me from childhood, which I felt I had to control, otherwise they might get me in trouble." But in Budapest you can still find people who remember him as a detached, ironic boy who poked fun at everything around him and didn't much like to work. The family spent most of each year in the city, summers on a resort island up the Danube and Christmas at a tony mountain resort. One old friend recalls Soros being asked what his father did for a living. "He said, 'My father does not work. He just makes money.' "

That sort of unconscious bliss ended when the Germans arrived in 1944. His father purchased false identity papers—Soros was called Janos Kis—and sent the children to live with gentiles in the area. Soros's memories of this time are contradictory. He is capable of offering a hope-and-glory rendition of the Holocaust. "In many ways it was the happiest year of my life," he will say. "It was dangerous and exciting. It made me a bit of a risk-taker. And I got to see my father at his very best." Other times, he recalls it rather less brightly. He explained, for example, his aversion to financing Jewish organizations with an anecdote from the early days of the roundup of Hungarian Jews:

> The Jewish Council asked the little kids to hand out the deportation notices. I was told to go to the Jewish Council. And there I was given these small slips of paper. It was three or four lines. It said report to the rabbi seminary at 9 a.m. tomorrow morning. Bring a blanket and food for twenty-four hours. And I was given a list of names. I took this piece

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of paper to my father. He instantly recognized it, you see. This was a list of Hungarian Jewish lawyers. He said, "You deliver the slips of paper and tell the people that if they report they will be deported." I'm not sure to what extent he knew they were going to be gassed. I did what my father said. There was one man I shall not forget. I took it to him and told him what my father had said. He said: "Tell your father that I am a law-abiding citizen, that I have always been a law-abiding citizen and I am not going to start breaking the law now." And that stayed with me *forever.*

III.

By the fourth day of the trip the French television crew had grown bored with Soros and returned to Paris. A pair of local stations were on hand, shivering in thick down jackets, to suffer in its place. Soros had been scheduled to meet with a handful of students at Moldova University. But when we arrived—without Soros, his private talk with the president was running over—we found that the informal conversation had turned into a speech, and the handful of students had become 500 students and faculty inside a creaking, wooden auditorium. Moldova is a heatless nation; its weathermen should provide two temperatures, indoor and out. It was probably a blessing that about as many people were crammed into the space as could fit—students sitting on each others' laps, students sitting on railings, students levitating mysteriously along the back wall so that from the stage the room resembled a Pontormo crowd scene. The older professors sat together at the front of the room.

ILLUSTRATION BY JIM HOLLOWAY FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC
THE WESTERN HALF OF THE SOROS EMPIRE.

An hour later Soros appeared, apologized and offered a brief history of his foundation. He is a better speaker than he is a writer. While his writing is often murky and clotted, his talks have the chilly clarity of a fingernail clinking against crystal. "When I made more money than I thought was healthy for my family I decided to set up a foundation," he began. "The foundation began in Hungary. Its purpose was to help to build a country from which I wouldn't want to emigrate." When he finished he offered to take questions. The resulting chaos forced the organizer to request that people submit their questions in writing. Dozens of white slips fluttered like small kites up to the front of the room: "We are a group of scientists who need funding"; "Is there no hope for the Moldovan economy?"; "How did you make your first money? Is it true that you had grown rich on speculation?" Soros ignored the requests for money, answered honestly a few questions about his past financial dealings and then seized on something in the stack. It was a large piece of paper folded tightly into a little square, addressed: "For dear sir George Soros (in hands)." It read:

According to the order of Moldovan minister of education, about 90 percent of the objects will be studied in all high schools of our republic in romanian language. What is your opinion on the fact that russian speakers will be not able to get high school education in their own language, and so many of them will have to leave high schools. Excuse my mistakes and thank you for the answer.

Soros paraphrased the question and then said, "I find this a very interesting question. I don't know the answer. I just think it is an interesting question. It is just the type of question that you will have to take the responsibility to answer for yourselves."

The old men in the front now tried to get Soros's attention. They had spent a lot of the time shifting around uncomfortably, as Soros spun a vision of Eastern Europe that did not include them. Unlike the students, they hadn't submitted to the Soroscentric system of writing their questions out for his inspection. They insisted on addressing him directly. Several of them clutched copies of Soros's books. Oddly, these were not the two books he has written about the politics of the region, but his financial opus, *The Alchemy of Finance*, in which he first floated his theory of history. One of the

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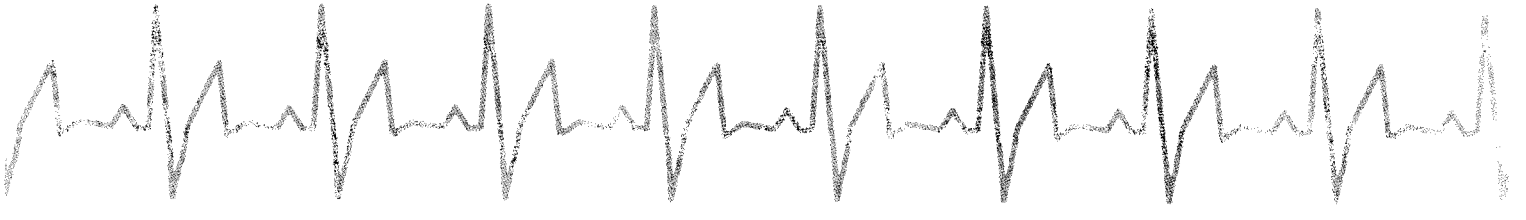

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old men rose and said, "Would you explain your reflexive philosophy of history?" Out of the corner of my eye I saw a foundation worker simulate an Edvard Munch scream.

IV.

Soros conceived his first theory of history a few years after his view of Jewish institutions turned cynical. He had left Hungary for England in 1948, and enrolled in the London School of Economics. Like a lot of other young men at LSE at the time, he fell under the spell of Karl Popper. And his theory of history, at least in its tone and structure, owes a great deal to the philosopher of science. It forms the core of each of his three rather incestuous books. (His first unpublished work was titled *The Burden of Consciousness.*) The theory runs, briefly, as follows:

Humans operate with an inherently flawed view of events. There is no such thing as "social science" because the truth of social matters—a stock market, a political system, a love affair—is unobtainable. There are two reasons for this. The first is that people always operate with a bias, which is to say their view of social events is faulty because their view of social events is faulty. The second is that human thought changes the state of the world, which in turn alters human thought—a sort of Heisenberg uncertainty principle of life that Soros calls "reflexivity." The inherent flaw in our understanding of social events can be small; Soros calls this a "near equilibrium" situation. Or it can be catastrophically large; Soros calls this a "far from equilibrium situation." Such a situation can be stable or unstable. If unstable—Japanese real estate prices, communism—it eventually must be resolved more quickly and violently than it was created. Soros describes this sequence of events as a "boom-bust" pattern.

Is that clear? I confess that after a half-dozen readings and an awkward attempt to get him to explain it to me I find his theory no more satisfying than when I first encountered it. As Soros concedes, it is of no obvious use to anyone trying to make money in the markets, and so does not prove that his success is a result of superior understanding. As he also concedes, it generates no testable hypotheses and so must remain forever a kind of metaphor rather than a true theory. But even as a metaphor it is more than a little weird. In what sense, for example, was the life of the Soviet system prolonged by people's misperceptions of events, rather than by brute force? Not surprisingly, Soros's attempts to ground his theories are sometimes almost painful to watch: "Participants are not detached observers," he writes. "Their thinking affects the situation to which it refers. Perhaps the simplest example is the attitude of a married couple toward each other at the time of their wedding and at the time of their divorce." Well, yes.

Perhaps the most useful way to read Soros's theory of history is as personal mythology. It almost perfectly reflects its creator. The Truth according to Soros may be unobtainable but it does, by implication, exist. And if the Truth exists then some people can be closer to it than others. It follows from Soros's tortured logic that he is in this privileged position, because he holds a key: he alone understands that one can never actually obtain truth. "The main difference between me and the markets," he wrote in *The Alchemy of Finance*, "is that markets seem to engage in a process of trial and error without the participants fully understanding what is going on, while I do it consciously. Presumably that is why I can do it better than the markets."

Ultimately Soros's mind is far more attracted to what works than what is true. And his theory does work, in a sense. It gives his hunches conviction. It permits him to dismiss with a wave of the hand a lot of people who might otherwise cloud his self-exalting worldview—economists who say that it is impossible systematically to beat the market, political scientists who say that the forces of history are greater than any one man. "It's lucky for me that we live in this world of imperfect understanding," he says. "If it came to knowledge, I wouldn't flourish. I would not be good at science. I was no good at doing economics at college because you have to be methodical. I was no good at practicing a discipline. Therefore I questioned the foundations of the discipline. And I'm good at that."

It should be said that a belief in one's innate superiority is implicit in the investment business: you don't set out to beat the market unless you think that the market—abstract, collective humanity—is at least a little dumber than you are. It should also be said that Soros's ability to beat the market is unprecedented in financial history. He began his financial career in the mid-1950s indifferently, not long after he left the London School of Economics. He spent the next fifteen years—first in London, where he failed, then in New York, where he succeeded—building a stake and a reputation as a broker and trader for small financial firms. At last in 1969 he set out to run his own investment fund, called The Quantum Fund. Since 1969 The Quantum Fund has grown by a bit more than 35 percent a year. One thousand dollars invested with him then would be worth approximately $2 million today. Arguments with Soros about his technique usually end there. But when you look closely at what Soros actually does, it seems wildly arbitrary. "In my investing," he told me, "I have often done the right thing for the wrong reason." Quite often, I responded, he seems to have done the right thing without a whole lot of reason at all. "That's another principle I have," he said, without skipping a beat. "Invest first and investigate later. One of my favorite concepts is 'fertile fallacies.' "

What Soros does—or rather did; he now delegates the trading to his already legendary successor, Stanley Druckenmiller—is speculate. The Quantum Fund portfolio of about $4.5 billion—Soros began with $4 million in 1969—is sunk in a basket of stocks against which is set another basket of stocks sold short. Around this

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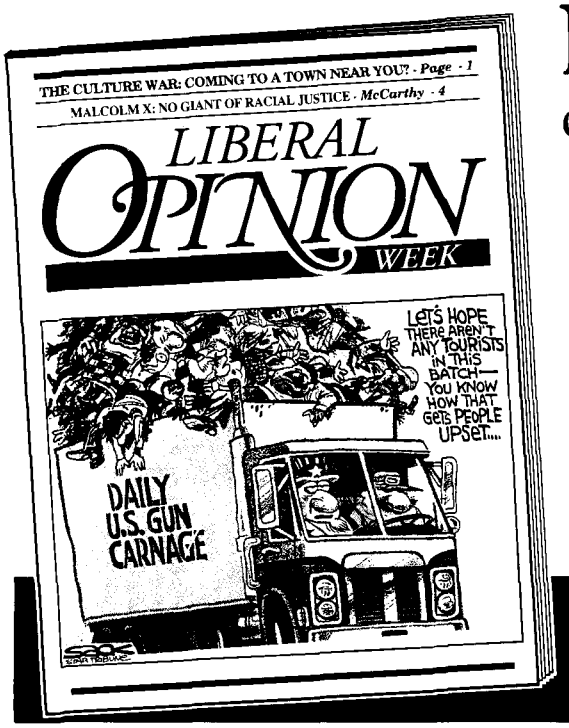
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core Soros whirls dervishly. The fund risks not merely its principal, but also vast sums borrowed against the principal, so that at any one time Soros might have made bets equal to seven times the value of his portfolio. The bets generally arise from nothing more scientific than Soros's reading of the newspapers (in order of importance to him, *The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times*). They tend to have as much to do with political as with financial events, and are likely to change daily. It was not uncommon for Soros to one day bet $1 billion that the yen would rise and the next, as the result of some finance minister's stray remark, bet $2 billion that it would fall. All of his extraordinary profits are the result of such giant gambles—what he calls "boom-bust types of investments"—paying off big.

Until last year the single most famous gamble Soros made was an inspired disaster: just before the stock-market crash of October 1987 he wagered heavily that a crash was about to happen, but that the American stock market would come out of it better off than the grotesquely inflated Japanese stock market. The Japanese stock market alone was spared the crash, due to the intervention of the Japanese government, and The Quantum Fund lost about $800 million. Soros was wrong for the right reasons. But last March The Quantum Fund sold short against the deutsche mark about $10 billion worth of British sterling. The details of the transaction were complex but the essence of it was a gargantuan wager that sterling would withdraw from the EMS. Although Druckenmiller had initiated the play, Soros provided his religiouslike faith in his own hunches. "I told him to go for the jugular," he says. "It's shooting fish in a barrel. As long as the barrel holds up you keep on shooting the fish." ("It takes courage to be a pig," Druckenmiller has said.) Other speculators joined in and at last the Bank of England proved unwilling to support its currency, and withdrew from the EMS. In a couple of weeks, The Quantum Fund took profits of a little more than $1 billion.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Soros's international financial activity is far less well-understood and far less easily evaluated than the "value investing" of, say, Warren Buffett, or, indeed, most other fund managers. Few studies of the sort that have been done in the stock market have been done to show that these new global markets are efficient. (Soros thinks that they are growing more efficient now that people are learning his theories.) Perhaps more interestingly, Soros's global speculation is entirely without the ethical foundations of investing. His activity actually mocks those who provide the long-term capital that fuels economic growth. From time to time you will hear professional speculators nattering on about their role in making markets efficient. Soros is refreshingly free of this sort of talk. While he believes that there is such a thing as good speculation, he also thinks a lot of speculation is destabilizing. Speculation is neither inherently good nor inherently evil; it just is.

V.

The ethical calculus shifts rather dramatically, however, when one ceases to speculate in currency futures and begins to speculate in people. And there is a sense in which Soros emerged from his midlife crisis of 1981 as a speculator in the human condition: he took a large long position in Eastern European intellectuals. "The same set of ideas is responsible both for my making of money and my giving it away," he says. He was laying down a bet on political change. And in the most astonishing way, of course, he was right.

On the heels of his midlife crisis, Soros had boyhood friends in Hungary put him in touch with Hungary's leading dissidents: Istvan Rev, Miklos Haraszti, the coincidentally named Janos Kis. Separately, Soros befriended a woman named Annette Laborey, who since 1974 had been running from Paris an underground network of nonconformists from the top to the bottom of Eastern Europe. "In those days," recalled Laborey, seated beside me on Soros's jet, "the only capital was

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the network of confidence and trust. George came to me and said, 'How much do you need?' And I knew I had to give an answer quickly. I said, '$10,000 would be really helpful.' He looked at me and he said, 'Annette, you must think larger.' " And for the next few years she did, funneling Soros's (anonymous) money into her network.

In 1984 Soros opened his first office, in Budapest, and began all manner of subversive activities for which he is temperamentally very well-equipped. "I started by trying to create small cracks in the monolithic structure which goes under the name of communism, in the belief that in a rigid structure even a small crack can have a devastating effect," he wrote in *Opening the Soviet System*. "As the cracks grew so did my efforts until they came to take up most of my time and energy." Says Liz Lorant, who worked with Soros from the start: "It was the excitement of what we got away with [that is irreplaceable]. We got away with murder. [For example] at that time Xerox machines were under lock and key. That was the way it was. In Romania you had to register a typewriter with the police. Well, we just flooded the whole damn country with Xerox machines so that the rules became meaningless." In short, by the time the dust settled over the Berlin Wall—boom! bust!—Soros had accumulated a highly charged portfolio of gratitude. The Great White Gods of Eastern Europe—Havel, Michnik, Kis, Haraszti—were all in his debt. So were all sorts of lesser-known, highly motivated people wending their way to high political office.

The sense of having won a bit too soon already had led Soros into one midlife crisis. Once again he had won big and everything was about to shift around; but this time he was imbued with higher purpose. Who better to fill the void left after the collapse of an ultimate truth than a man who had built a life on the idea that the truth was unobtainable? Soros's thousands became Soros's millions and Soros's millions became Soros's tens of millions and finally there emerged from the rubble of his prerevolutionary activities a far more nebulous and awesome operation of 800 people in forty-five offices strung across twenty-two countries. Its sense of purpose came in part from having turned itself into a kind of metaphor. As he criss-crossed Eastern Europe Soros explained to audiences that his foundation was a microcosm of open society. And at the center of that society sat a self-styled outsider—Soros himself—financing every oppressed minority he could find—Jews, intellectuals, Gypsies—and insisting on his, and by implication, their, right to be tolerated. "You can't tell people how to be pluralistic," says Laborey. "You have to show them." And so it is that an enterprise that began in perfect anonymity arrived at almost perfect egocentricity.

VI.

By the end of the last day of the trip Soros had awed Albania, and nearly rid himself of all traveling companions. There were just the two of us left on board his jet, scheduled to fly from Tiranë to Vienna, and I arrived first and took my seat in the back. Soros at length boarded, then had a sudden thought. "I think I want to go to London instead of Vienna," he told the pilot. The pilot had just completed two hours of preparation for a trip to Vienna. "Mr. Soros," the pilot said, "you are the most challenging customer we have." And Mr. Soros chuckled, as if he had just been told a good joke. We were going to London. I suggested to him that his view of the world might be a tad distorted by the fact that everyone around him is always seeking to please him. "But that in itself is very pleasant," he said, "I mean, it's much more pleasant than if people want to annoy you." Which is, of course, true.

The billionaire speculator slept until we were over Sarajevo (you can still fly over and look down). Then he invited me to take the seat across from him and talk—mostly about his midlife crisis, as it happened. But what struck me more than what he said was what he heard. He is a peculiarly selfish listener. One has the sense that he does not even hear 90 percent of what he's told; and the 10 percent he does hear he colonizes so completely that you forget that it was you who said it. Just the day before we had been riding in the back of his limousine somewhere in Bulgaria, searching for some oppressed Gypsies to give his money to, and to make conversation I'd said, "You know, it's ironic that after a lifetime of criticizing and even destroying institutions you find yourself building this monstrous institution." "I am aware of the irony," he said, wanly.

But as we spoke he suddenly assumed a tone that suggested he was about to say something fresh. "You know," he said, "it is highly ironic that I am building an institution, given that I've spent my career...." His books are the same way—a lot of borrowing without many footnotes. Maybe one of the privileges of wealth is that it permits you to lead your life without attribution. Everything you say is of interest simply because you are saying it. For Soros that is more true now than ever before. Although he no longer makes investment decisions, his every financial utterance is treated as if it had $10 billion behind it. Were I to write that Soros predicted that gold is due to rise (he didn't) gold would rise the day the remark saw print. No wonder he is so possessed by his idea that people see the world imperfectly. It is merely a reflection of how the world sees him.

Some number—possibly some large number—of lives will be prolonged because of Soros. Some number of people will live more happily. Yet Soros resists the obvious temptation to sanctimony in a way that he does not resist egotism and fantasy. He does not wish to be taken for a saint. When people—friends and enemies—try to describe him, they reach for characters from literature, and with reason. Literary characters remain shaded; they are either tainted virtue or touched-up vice. They are not saints. And neither will be Soros, if for no better reason than his inability to suffer the association. The club of saints is beneath him! •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Changings

Contrary to popular belief, homosexuality has long been a film subject. Quite apart from cross-dressing, which is in some of the earliest films and of course is not synonymous with homosexuality, the first openly gay film was made in Germany in 1919—*Different from the Others*, with Conrad Veidt. More recent actors who have played homosexuals: Rex Harrison, Dirk Bogarde, Robert Preston, Rod Steiger, Peter Finch, Shirley MacLaine—and numerous others in American and foreign films.

A good source on the subject is Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet*; but Russo's book was published in 1981, before AIDS. (B.A. may become a grim calendar notation.) AIDS reached the screen in 1986 with *Parting Glances* (unseen by me), made by Bill Sherwood, who subsequently died of the disease. *Longtime Companion*, which came along in 1990, got more attention. Now the subject gets major treatment with the discreetly titled **Philadelphia** (TriStar). It stars Tom Hanks as a gay man with AIDS, and Hollywood can't get much starrier than Tom Hanks these days.

I don't remotely suggest topical chic or, as with some black films in the past, a cynical box office move. *Philadelphia* is patently genuine. But the fact that it was made at a big-budget level and that Hanks is in it is open acknowledgment of a chilling phenomenon. AIDS, this film says silently, now affects everyone's life, directly or indirectly.

There's no hint in *Philadelphia* of a disease-of-the-week T.V. special. Ron Nyswaner's screenplay has no touch of exploitative daring: it concentrates on character, paradox, irony and a credible measure of courage. It effectively uses a lawsuit as a dramatic armature. Hanks is a successful lawyer with a giant firm. Unknown to the firm, he is gay and has AIDS. He is promoted by the head of the firm, Jason Robards, and is given an important case to handle. Soon after, there is an office brouhaha over a crucial document that Hanks prepared and that is temporarily misplaced. He is fired.

He sues his firm for discrimination. He contends that the document was deliberately misplaced, that he was sabotaged because the firm had found out about his sexuality and illness and wanted to jettison him. After nine failed attempts to engage counsel to represent him, he tries a black "neighborhood" attorney, Denzel Washington, whom he had opposed once in court. Washington declines, with restrained but obvious abhorrence; later, after some telling developments, he accepts.

The trial is the basis of the film. On it is built much about the lives of gay people and their families and lovers and friends, about attitudes that are changing and those that are not. Hanks's family is unshakably loyal. (Entirely credible. I've known a few families like that.) The law partners, crustily macho, deny any discrimination and are clever enough to choose a woman to defend them.

Changed views of gays about themselves are manifest. One of the most striking moments in the film is a small one. Many people assume that Washington is gay (he is not) because he is defending a gay, and one day when he is shopping in a drug store, a gay black law student cruises him. When Washington vociferously withdraws, the student is completely unruffled. He acts as if Washington's resentment is silly and uncivilized.

Jonathan Demme, the director of *Swimming to Cambodia* and *Silence of the Lambs*, gets acute acting from his cast. Washington gives his best performance since *Glory*, seeming to grow before our eyes. Mary Steenburgen, the lawyer defending Hanks's former firm, gives her best performance ever because, for once, she is not asked to be winsome. Her job is to be aggressively lucid, and she is. Jason Robards could resonate his big-time lawyer role in his sleep, but he's wide awake here, and flavorful. Joanne Woodward, as Hanks's mother, is gently bereft.

Hanks's performance runs two risks. It may be overpraised just because we see him physically withering—with the help of makeup people. On the other hand, it may be underrated just because he had the help of makeup people and (in blunt professional terms) of a disease. Hanks has concentrated on the man within: he seems to be reaching further and further into the character. One scene that is clearly designed to be a standout is nonetheless a standout. In his loft apartment one evening with Washington he plays a recording of *Andrea Chénier*. Callas sings the great lush

FILMS WORTH SEEING

A Dangerous Woman. *The story is trite and somewhat trying, but see it for Debra Winger's sterling performance as a woman whose mind is slightly below par. (Reviewed 12/20/93)* **In the Name of the Father.** *Based on fact, the account of the Guildford Four, Irish people falsely convicted in 1974 of terrorism in Britain, cleared fifteen years later. Daniel Day-Lewis plays the lead strongly in this fiercely relevant story. (1/3/94)* **The Remains of the Day.** *Anthony Hopkins is the butler, Emma Thompson the housekeeper in a Stately Home. The novel is overexplicated, but those two performances make it very rewarding. (12/6/93)* **Schindler's List.** *Steven Spielberg's monumental rendition of a strange, wonderful story—the Nazi businessman who saved 1,100 Jews in occupied Poland. Excellent. (12/13/93)* **—SK**

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soprano highlight of the score, encountering immensities of life and death. Hanks knows the aria very very well, possesses it, treats Callas's singing as the voice of his own anguish. Demme and Hanks make the moment an apotheosis.

But Demme, Nyswaner and the producers seem to have lost their senses at the end of the film—structurally and thematically. The Hanks character dies soon after the jury reaches a verdict; and the picture then bids him farewell. This takes about five minutes, but it seems five hours. First, there's a "wake" party. Then there are home movies of the dead man as a child, as a growing boy, on and on. Not only is the picture well over before any of this begins, all our emotional accounts, so to speak, are settled. To keep plugging pathos is to dull our feeling. To keep proving with those home movies that he was a boy just like every other boy, not a freak, is to debase the film's seriousness. Can't they lop off that grating finale?

The Summer House (Samuel Goldwyn) proves again that even if you can't teach an old dog new tricks, the old tricks can still be amusing when neatly done. This film is one more go-round with the gimmick of the colorful stranger irrupting into some colorless lives and improving them. The dull people here live in a suburb outside London. A wedding is to be held. A luridly bohemian relative, a woman, arrives for the wedding. The bohemian, who, by strict convention of this unconventional character, never errs or judges falsely, leaves everyone better off.

Lena Headey is engaged to marry David Threlfall, a longtime neighbor. She is almost comatose with uninterest; he, aware of this, is peevishly insistent. Through flashbacks, we learn that Headey had an adventure on a recent trip to Egypt that killed any possible concern with Threlfall. Her mother, Julie Walters, unaware of the adventure, is matrimonially bent. The bridegroom's mother, Joan Plowright, is more perceptive but could hardly care less one way or another.

Enter, with red hair and cigarette holder and affectionate anarchy, Jeanne Moreau, worldly and weathered. Once she arrives, we know that, somehow, Headey will be saved. En route are a good number of pleasant sequences—Moreau and Plowright getting chummily potted together, for instance—and some nippy dialogue. (Martin Sherman's screenplay comes from Alice Thomas Ellis's novel.) When wedding preparations are proceeding, the stony-faced cleaning woman mutters, "Prefer funerals myself. Food's better." •

An argument for the primacy of political rights.

Freedoms and Needs

By Amartya Sen

At the southern edge of Bangladesh and West Bengal in India, bordering on the Bay of Bengal, is the Sundarban, which literally means "beautiful forest." It is the natural habitat of the so-called Royal Bengal Tiger. Few of the tigers are left, but they are now protected by a hunting ban. The Sundarban is famous also for the honey that it produces in large clusters of natural beehives. The people bordering that region, many of whom are desperately poor, go into the forests to collect the honey, but they also have to escape the tigers. In a good year, only about fifty or so honey-gatherers are killed by tigers, but the number can be much higher when things do not go so well.

The tigers are protected, but nothing protects the human beings who make a living in those deep and lovely and perilous woods: this is just one illustration of the force of economic needs in many Third World countries. It is not hard to feel that this force can outweigh other claims, including the claims of liberty and political rights. If poverty drives human beings to take terrible risks, and sometimes to suffer terrible deaths, for a dollar or two of honey, it might well be odd to insist on discussing their liberty and their political rights.

A concept such as habeas corpus, for example, might not seem very relevant, or even at all communicable, in such a context. Priority must surely be given, or so the argument runs, to fulfilling economic needs, even if it involves compromising political liberties; political rights are a "luxury" that a poor country "cannot afford." This skepticism about the

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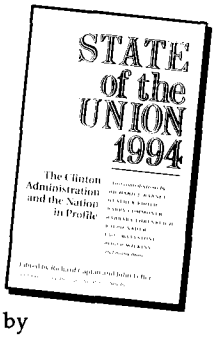

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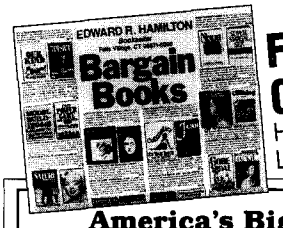

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primacy of political rights, including civil rights, is heard very frequently in international discussions. Why bother about the finesse of democracy given the overpowering grossness of material need?

Such a question reflects a deep agnosticism about the urgency of political freedoms, an agnosticism that loomed large at the conference on human rights in Vienna earlier this year, where delegates from several countries argued against a general endorsement of basic political rights across the globe, in particular in the Third World. The focus, it was argued, should be rather on "economic rights" and the satisfaction of elementary economic needs. The declaration that emerged from the Vienna conference was very much a compromise, to which the United States was a leading party; it left many ambiguities in demanding civil and political rights, but it did acknowledge them in a general way, along with economic rights.

The place of political rights also has been under active debate in many other international forums, including various organs of the United Nations, even spilling into the recent meetings of the International Olympic Committee. It has become a particularly urgent question facing sub-Saharan Africa, as democracy begins to regain some of the ground it has lost fairly comprehensively since the 1960s. Indeed, there are few general issues more central to the contemporary, and especially the developing, world.

But is a dichotomous view of economic needs and political rights a sensible way of approaching the problem? Do needs and rights represent a basic contradiction? Do the former really undermine the latter? I would argue that this is altogether the wrong way to understand, first, the force of economic needs and, second, the salience of political rights. The real issues that have to be addressed lie elsewhere, and they involve taking note of extensive interconnections between the enjoyment of political rights and the appreciation of economic needs. Political rights can have a major role in providing incentives and information toward the solution of economic privation. But the connections between rights and needs are not merely instrumental; they are also constitutive. For our conceptualization of economic needs depends on open public debates and discussions, and the guaranteeing of those debates and those discussions requires an insistence on political rights.

The attack on political rights (which include civil rights) on the grounds of the force of economic needs contrasts starkly with a broad current of modern political philosophy that tends to assert, in one form or another, what John Rawls has called "the priority of liberty." That priority takes a particularly sharp form in modern libertarian theory, some formulations of which claim (for example, in Robert Nozick's first book, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*) that extensive classes of rights—varying from personal liberties to property rights—have nearly complete political precedence over the pursuit of social goals, including the removal of deprivation. In less demanding liberal formulations, most notably in the writings of Rawls, the rights that receive precedence are much less extensive, and essentially consist of various personal liberties. But the precedence that these more limited rights receive is complete; and while they cover much less than the rights championed in libertarian theory, they, too, cannot be in any way compromised by the force of economic needs.

The case for such a complete priority of liberty can be disputed by demonstrating the force of other considerations, including those of economic needs. Why must a society get all excited about making the desperately poor honey-gatherer in the Sundarban free from the interference of his neighbors or the state, while leaving him forced by economics to take the risk of being eaten by a tiger? This issue was raised, in a general form, by H. L. A. Hart in 1973, in a famous article in the *University of Chicago Law Review* disputing in particular the plausibility of presuming "a preference for liberty over other goods which every self-interested person who is rational would have." Rawls, too, has acknowledged the force of Hart's argument, and in his new book, *Political Liberalism*, he has suggested ways of accommodating it.

If the priority of liberty is to be made plausible in general, and particularly in the context of countries that are intensely poor, the nature of the claim would need, I would argue, to be considerably modified. It is possible to distinguish between Rawls's strict proposal that liberty should receive overwhelming precedence in the case of a conflict, and his general procedure of separating out personal liberty from other types of advantages, for special treatment. The second claim is a more general one, concerning the relative importance to be attached to liberties compared with individual advantages of other kinds. The real issue is not the absolute precedence of personal liberty, but whether a person's liberty should be given more importance than other types of personal advantages, such as incomes.

Is the significance of liberty for a society adequately reflected by the weight that an individual would tend to give to it in judging his or her own overall advantage? This may be disputed; and the issue of the pre-eminence of liberty relates to that challenge. The political significance of rights can far exceed the personal utility of rights; that is, it can exceed the extent to which the personal advantage of the holders of these rights is enhanced by having these rights. In this respect, political rights are not symmetrical with other sources of individual advantage; and the safeguarding of political rights would have the procedural priority that follows from this asymmetry.

Consider an illustration from India. The outrage that was felt across the country at the killing of helpless Muslims by a small but organized group of Hindu extremists in Bombay last winter did not simply reflect the tragedy of human deaths. While the number of people who perished in Bombay was large, perhaps as large as 1,000, in the scale of deaths this magnitude is outweighed many times over by the number of people who die from preventable illnesses every single day in that huge and needy country. What was outrageous was not only the unnecessary deaths, but also the violation, by means of targeted attacks on one particular community, of the liberty to live.

The people who died in those riots might or might not have themselves held a view as to whether, if they were to die, they would prefer to die of a painful illness or in an accident or at the hands of a communal rioter. That is not the issue here. The violation of their basic liberty to live, resulting from the homicidal actions of extremists, involved something much more terrible; and the nature of the outrage across India confirms the fact that this distinction is widely understood and seen to be important. It even had an impact, among other factors, on the recent electoral reverses suffered by the BJP, the Hindu activist party, in its contest with its secularist opponents, even though the BJP itself had not been directly involved in the murders.

This is not a matter of complicated deontology, which only a person steeped in high Kantianism can be expected to grasp. There are deep and fundamental and intuitively understood grounds for rejecting the view that confines itself merely to checking the parity of outcomes, the view that matches death for death, happiness for happiness, fulfillment for fulfillment, irrespective of how

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all this death, happiness and fulfillment comes about.

Those who are skeptical of the relevance of political rights to poor countries would not necessarily deny the basic importance of political rights. Some of them would not even deny my contention that the nastiness of the violation of liberty can go well beyond other forms of disadvantage. Instead their arguments turn on the impact of political rights on the fulfillment of economic needs, and they take this impact to be firmly negative and overwhelmingly important.

The belief abounds that political rights correlate negatively with economic growth. Indeed, something of a "general theory" of this relationship between political liberty and economic prosperity has been articulated recently by that unlikely theorist Lee Kuan Yew, the former prime minister of Singapore; and the praise of the supposed advantages of "the hard state" in promoting economic development goes back a long way in the development literature. Even the sagacious Gunnar Myrdal's extensive skepticism, in *Asian Drama*, of what he called "the soft state" has sometimes been interpreted (rather unfairly to Myrdal) as a celebration of political toughness in the cause of good economics.

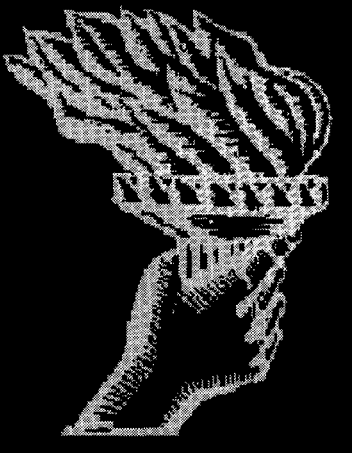
It is true that some relatively authoritarian states (such as Lee's Singapore, South Korea under military rule and more recently China) have had faster rates of economic growth than some less authoritarian states (such as India, Costa Rica and Jamaica). But the overall picture is much more complex than such isolated observations might suggest. Systematic statistical studies give little support to the view of a general conflict between civil rights and economic performance. In fact, scholars such as Partha Dasgupta, Abbas Pourgerami and Surjit Bhalla have offered substantial evidence to suggest that political and civil rights have a *positive* impact on economic progress. Other scholars find divergent patterns, while still others argue, in the words of John Helliwell, that on the basis of the information so far obtained "an optimistic interpretation of the overall results would thus be that democracy, which apparently has a value independent of its economic effects, is estimated to be available at little cost in terms of subsequent lower growth."

There is not much comfort in all these findings for the "Lee Kuan Yew hypothesis" that there exists an essential conflict between political rights and economic performance. The general thesis in praise of the tough state suffers not only from casual empiricism based on a few selected examples, but also from a lack of conceptual discrimination. Political and civil rights come in various types, and authoritarian intrusions take many forms. It would be a mistake, for example, to equate North Korea with South Korea in the infringement of political rights, even though both have violated many such rights; the complete suppression of opposition parties in the North can hardly be taken to be no more repressive than the roughness with which opposition parties have been treated in the South. Some authoritarian regimes, both of the "left" and of the "right," such as Zaire or Sudan or Ethiopia or the Khmer Rouge's Cambodia, have been enormously more hostile to political rights than many other regimes that are also identified, rightly, as authoritarian.

Thus, broader empirical coverage as well as greater discrimination and precision are needed to re-examine the common generalizations in favor of the repressive state, and these generalizations do not survive much scrutiny. It is also necessary to examine more rigorously the *causal* process that is supposed to underlie these generalizations about the impact of authoritarianism on prosperity. The processes that led to the economic success of, say, South Korea are now reasonably well understood; a variety of factors played a part, including the use of international markets, an openness to competition, a high level of literacy, successful land reforms and the provision of selective incentives to encourage growth and exports. There is *nothing* to indicate that these economic and social policies were inconsistent with greater democracy, that they had to be sustained by the elements of authoritarianism actually present in South Korea. The danger of taking *post hoc* to be *propter hoc* is as real in the making of such political and strategic judgments as it is in any empirical reasoning.

Thus the fundamental importance of political rights is not refuted by some allegedly negative effect of these rights on economic performance. In fact, the instrumental connections may even give a very positive role to political rights in the context of deprivations of a drastic and elementary kind: whether, and how, a government responds to intense needs and sufferings may well depend on how much pressure is put on it, and whether or not pressure is put on it will depend on the exercise of political rights (such as voting, criticizing, protesting and so on).

Consider the matter of famine. I have tried to argue elsewhere that the avoidance of such economic disasters as



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famines is made much easier by the existence, and the exercise, of various liberties and political rights, including the liberty of free expression. Indeed, one of the remarkable facts in the terrible history of famine is that no substantial famine has ever occurred in a country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press. They have occurred in ancient kingdoms and in contemporary authoritarian societies, in primitive tribal communities and in modern technocratic dictatorships, in colonial economies governed by imperialists from the north and in newly independent countries of the south run by despotic national leaders or by intolerant single parties. But famines have never afflicted any country that is independent, that goes to elections regularly, that has opposition parties to voice criticisms, that permits newspapers to report freely and to question the wisdom of government policies without extensive censorship.

Is this historical association between the absence of famine and the presence of political freedom a causal one, or is it simply an accidental connection? The possibility that the connection between democratic political rights and the absence of famine is a "bogus correlation" may seem plausible when one considers the fact that democratic countries are typically rather rich, and thus immune to famine for other reasons. But the absence of famine holds even for those democratic countries that happen to be poor, such as India, Botswana and Zimbabwe. There is also what we might call "intertemporal evidence," which we observe when a country undergoes a transition to democracy. Thus India continued to have famines right up to the time of independence in 1947; the last famine, and one of the largest, was the Bengal famine of 1943, in which it is estimated that between 2 million and 3 million people died. Since independence, however, and the installation of a multiparty democratic system, there has been no substantial famine, even though severe crop failures and food scarcities have occurred often enough (in 1968, 1973, 1979 and 1987).

Why might we expect a general connection between democracy and the nonoccurrence of famines? The answer is not hard to seek. Famines kill millions of people in different countries in the world, but they do not kill the rulers. The kings and the presidents, the bureaucrats and the bosses, the military leaders and the commanders never starve. And if there are no elections, no opposition parties, no forums for uncensored public criticism, then those in authority do not have to suffer the political consequences of their failure to prevent famine. Democracy, by contrast, would spread the penalty of famine to the ruling groups and the political leadership.

There is, moreover, the issue of information. A free press, and more generally the practice of democracy, contributes greatly to bringing out the information that can have an enormous impact on policies for famine prevention, such as facts about the early effects of droughts and floods, and about the nature and the results of unemployment. The most elementary source of basic information about a threatening famine is the news media, especially when there are incentives, which a democratic system provides, for revealing facts that may be embarrassing to the government, facts that an undemocratic regime would tend to censor. Indeed, I would argue that a free press and an active political opposition constitute the best "early warning system" that a country threatened by famine can possess.

The connection between political rights and economic needs can be illustrated in the specific context of famine prevention by considering the massive Chinese famines of 1958-61. Even before the recent economic reforms, China had been much more successful than India in economic development. The average life expectancy, for example, rose in China much more than it did in India, and well before the reforms of 1979 it had already reached something like the high figure—nearly seventy years at birth—that is quoted now. And yet China was unable to prevent famine. It is now estimated that the Chinese famines of 1958-61 killed close to 30 million people—ten times more than even the gigantic 1943 famine in British India.

The so-called "Great Leap Forward," initiated in the late 1950s, was a massive failure, but the Chinese government refused to admit it, and continued dogmatically to pursue much the same disastrous policies for three more years. It is hard to imagine that this could have happened in a country that goes to the polls regularly and has an independent press. During that terrible calamity, the government faced no pressure from newspapers, which were controlled, or from opposition parties, which were not allowed to exist.

The lack of a free system of news distribution even misled the government itself. It believed its own propaganda and the rosy reports of local party officials competing for credit in Beijing. Indeed, there is evidence that just as the famine was moving toward its peak, the Chinese authorities mistakenly believed that they had 100 million more metric tons of grain than they actually did. Interestingly enough, Mao himself, whose radical beliefs had much to do with the initiation of, and the perseverance with, the Great Leap Forward, identified the informational role of democracy, once the failure was belatedly acknowledged. In 1962, just after the famine had killed so many millions, he made the following observation, to a gathering of 7,000 cadres:

> Without democracy, you have no understanding of what is happening down below; the situation will be unclear; you will be unable to collect sufficient opinions from all sides; there can be no communication between top and bottom; top-level organs of leadership will depend on one-sided and incorrect material to decide issues, thus you will find it difficult to avoid being subjectivist; it will be impossible to achieve unity of understanding and unity of action, and impossible to achieve true centralism.

Mao's defense of democracy here is quite limited. The focus is exclusively on the informational side, ignoring the incentive role of democracy, not to mention any intrinsic importance that it may have. Still, it is significant that Mao himself acknowledged the extent to which disastrous official policies were caused by the lack of the informational links that a more democratic system could have provided.

These issues remain relevant in China today. Since the economic reforms of 1979, official Chinese policies have been based on the acknowledgment of the importance of economic incentives without a similar acknowledgment of the importance of political incentives. When things go reasonably well, this disciplinary role of democracy might not be greatly missed; but when big policy mistakes are made, this lacuna can be quite disastrous. The significance of the democracy movements in contemporary China has to be judged in this light.

Another set of examples comes from sub-Saharan Africa, which has been plagued by persistent famine since the early 1970s. There are many factors underlying the susceptibility of this region to famine, from the ecological impact of climatic deterioration—making crops more uncertain—to the negative effects of persistent wars and skirmishes. But the typically authoritarian nature of many of the sub-Saharan African polities also has something to do with the frequency of famine.

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The nationalist movements were all anti-colonialist, but they were not all pro-democratic, and it is only recently that the assertion of the value of democracy has achieved some political respectability in many of the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. And in this political milieu the cold war did not help at all. The United States and its allies were ready to support undemocratic governments if they were sufficiently anti-Communist, no matter how anti-egalitarian they might be in their domestic policies. (The Soviet Union and China, of course, also did not recoil from authoritarian regimes.) When opposition parties were banned and newspapers were suppressed, there were very few international protests.

One must not deny that there were African governments even in one-party states that were deeply concerned about averting disasters and famine. Examples of this range from the tiny country of Cape Verde to the politically experimental nation of Tanzania. But quite often the absence of opposition and the suppression of free newspapers gave the respective governments an immunity from social criticism and political pressure that translated into thoroughly insensitive and callous policies. Often famines were taken for granted, and it was common to put the blame for the disasters on natural causes and the perfidy of other countries. In various ways, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Chad, several of the Sahel countries and others provide glaring examples of how badly things can go wrong without the discipline of opposition parties and the news media. The present problem of Somalia seems to be a lack of political and economic order, of an effective national government; but the way toward this crisis was prepared by decades of intolerance, authoritarianism and a general undermining of orderly political processes.

This is not to deny that famines in these countries were often associated with crop failures: when a crop fails, it not only affects the food supply, it also destroys employment and the means of livelihood. But the occurrence of crop failures is not independent of public policies (such as governmental fixing of relative prices, policy regarding irrigation and agricultural research and so on). Moreover, even when crops fail, a famine can be averted by a careful redistribution policy. Botswana, for example, experienced a fall in food production of 17 percent, and Zimbabwe a fall of 38 percent, between 1979-81 and 1983-84, in the same period in which the decline in food production amounted to a relatively modest 11 percent or 12 percent in Sudan and Ethiopia. Sudan and Ethiopia, with comparatively smaller declines in food output, had major famines. Botswana and Zimbabwe had none. This splendid outcome was owed largely to timely and extensive famine prevention policies by these latter countries. And democracy, which included a relatively uncensored press, made such policies imperative. For had the governments in Botswana and Zimbabwe failed to do this, they would have come under severe criticism from the political opposition. The Ethiopian and Sudanese governments, by contrast, did not have to reckon with such democratic inconveniences.

The role of electoral processes is sometimes underestimated even in the rich, developed countries. Thus, in understanding the deprivation of immigrants in Germany, who are often subjected to severe attacks by right-wing groups, more emphasis may have to be placed on the absence of voting rights for noncitizens and their corresponding lack of political power. In Britain, by contrast, where special electoral laws give resident Commonwealth citizens full voting rights whether or not they are British citizens, immigrants from the West Indies or from such countries as India, Bangladesh, Nigeria or Ghana acquire a measure of political clout immediately, which is particularly important in local elections. This tends to weaken the political exploitation of anti-immigrant sentiments in an extremist direction. The sharp contrast between the recent experiences of immigrants in Britain and in Germany owes something to the respective reach of a democratic political culture in the two countries.

In making such arguments, of course, there is the danger of exaggerating the effectiveness of democracy. Political rights and liberties are permissive advantages, and their effectiveness depends on how they are exercised. Democracies have been particularly successful in preventing disasters that are easy to understand, in which sympathy can take an especially immediate form. Many other problems are not quite so accessible. Thus India's success in eradicating famine is not matched by a similar success in eliminating non-extreme hunger, or in curing persistent illiteracy or in relieving inequalities in gender relations. While the plight of famine victims is easy to politicize, these other deprivations call for deeper analysis, and for greater and more effective use of mass communication and political participation—in sum, for a fuller practice of democracy.

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A similar observation may be made about various failings in more mature democracies as well. For example, the extraordinary deprivations in health care, education and social environment of African Americans in the United States make their mortality rates exceptionally high; as I tried to show in *Scientific American* in May 1993, American blacks have low survival chances not only compared with American whites, but also compared with the citizens of China, Sri Lanka or the Indian state of Kerala, who are better provided with these public goods (despite being immensely poorer in per capita income). And some American blacks are even more deprived than others: the male residents of Harlem not only have lower survival chances than the corresponding groups in Kerala or Sri Lanka or China, they even fall behind Bangladeshi men by their late 30s.

But, again, the remedy of these failures in the practice of democracy turns, to a great extent, on the fuller use of political and civil rights, including more public discussion, more accessible information and more concrete proposals. To be sure, the difficulties in deciding on the means of eradicating these hardened deprivations remain, and they have become quite perspicuous in the sphere of health care in recent months. Still, the fact that the lack of medical care for many has become so prominent in the politics of the United States is what lends the matter its urgency, what directs new energy toward the solution of the problem. And the same grounds for hope would be true in the case of the poorer countries as well.

It is important to acknowledge, however, the special difficulty of making a democracy take adequate notice of some types of deprivation, particularly the needs of minorities. One factor of some importance is the extent to which a minority group in a particular society can build on sympathy rather than alienation. When a minority forms a highly distinct and particularist group, it can be harder for it to receive the sympathy of the majority, and then the protective role of democracy may be particularly constrained.

Consider the ineffectiveness of electoral politics in ensuring sensitivity to the rights and the welfare of separatist groups, particularly those groups that are tainted with some use of terrorist methods, and with receiving assistance from beyond the border. Illustrations are not hard to find in India, particularly in the case of Kashmir, where there is increasing evidence of the violation of civil rights and personal liberties by the Indian police and military. The frustration of the Kashmiris does not seem to influence the political behavior of the majority of Indians. Even India's large Muslim population, which numbers well over 100 million, does not appear to have much interest in working for the rights of the relatively tiny Muslim population of Kashmir. There is also a basic tension between the separatism of Kashmiri Muslim activists and the deep-seated integrationist beliefs of the immensely larger Muslim population in the rest of the country.

In the rather straitjacketed models of so-called "rational choice theory," which tend to characterize human beings as narrowly self-interested, it is hard to incorporate the satisfaction of minority needs through majority votes. To some extent this skepticism is justified. Even the plight of African Americans has something to do with the fact that blacks constitute a relatively small minority of the American population. And yet politics does not always operate in this way. Much depends on which issues are identified and politicized and made into a concern of those who are not directly involved. Potential famine victims form a small minority in any country (a famine rarely affects more than 5 percent, and at most 10 percent, of a population), and the effectiveness of democracy in the prevention of famine has tended to depend on the politicization of the plight of famine victims, through the process of public discussion, which generates political solidarity. Outrage at famine deaths moves vast numbers of people who are in no way threatened by starvation themselves. In the United States, similarly, the plight of the medically uninsured, who really are a deprived minority, seems to have become politicized at last, and there is some real hope that the political process will lead to remedial arrangements, which are much overdue. The reach of political rights is deeply influenced by the way in which they are used.

The examples that I have been discussing so far illustrate the practical and instrumental linkages between political liberty and sensitivity to economic needs; but we must not overlook, in the practical discussion of these matters, the constitutive importance of political rights. I have already argued that the importance of such rights goes beyond the personal advantages that the holders of these rights derive from them, that there is an asymmetry between political rights and other types of advantages, including economic ones. But there is, in addition, a deeper connection. The comprehension and the conceptualization of economic needs themselves may require the exercise of political and civil rights, open discussion and public exchange.

Human lives suffer from miseries and deprivations of various kinds, some more amenable to alleviation than others. The totality of the human predicament would be an undiscriminating basis for the social analysis of needs. There are many things that we might have good reason to value if they were feasible, maybe even immortality; yet we do not see them as needs. Our conception of needs relates to our analysis of the nature of deprivations, and also to our understanding of what can be done about them. Political rights, including freedom of expression and discussion, are not only pivotal in inducing political responses to economic needs, they are also central to the conceptualization of economic needs themselves.

Sometimes it is hard to determine what is, or is not, an economic need. Take the controversial subject of population policy. Much depends on how we count the pressure on the world's resources, a subject on which scientific opinion varies. No less importantly, the conceptualization of the problem depends on what view we take of the willingness of people to reduce the birth rate on a voluntary basis, as the opportunity of family planning is extended and the reduction in the death rate makes it less important to have many children to ensure some survivors when the parents are old.

The international politics of population policy is rife with pressure groups. Their views vary from a general hostility toward birth control (and more specifically toward abortion) to an advocacy of population control so forceful that it would override what the people themselves would voluntarily do. These issues are bound to receive considerable attention and scrutiny in the coming decade. Among the developing countries, China has distinguished itself in its use of coercion to cut down the growth rate of its population, in some regions by means of such measures as a "one-child policy," and more generally by the conditioning of social security and economic rights (such as housing) on adherence to the government's rules about the number of births, the terrible predicament of children in larger families notwithstanding. There are many admirers of such harsh policies. And the birth rate in China has certainly come down; the last systematic estimate put it around twenty-one per 1,000, which is considerably lower than India's thirty per 1,000 and the average figure of thirty-eight per 1,000 for poor

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countries other than India and China.

Within India, however, there are wide variations in the birth rate, and these variations relate both to rates of mortality and to education, especially to female education. Consider the state of Kerala, which, with its population of 29 million people, is rather larger than Canada. Kerala has the highest life expectancy in India (more than seventy years, a little higher than that of China's), the highest rate of literacy in general, and the highest rate of female literacy (higher than that of China as a whole and higher, for corresponding rural populations, than that of every province in China). The birth rate in Kerala has fallen sharply over the last few decades, from forty-four per 1,000 in the 1950s to twenty per 1,000 in the late 1980s. In making comparisons, it is important to observe that the Keralan figure of twenty per 1,000, which is no higher than the Chinese birth rate of twenty-one per 1,000 in the corresponding period, has not been achieved by compulsory birth control or by the violation of the individual's freedom to decide on these matters, but by the voluntary exercise of the family's right to family planning. And subsequent provisional statistics suggest that China's further fall in birth rate in very recent years—it is now down to nineteen per 1,000—has continued to be matched by Kerala's declining birth rate, which was estimated to be eighteen per 1,000 in 1991.

The change in Kerala is owed in part to the operation of economic and social incentives toward smaller families, as the death rate has fallen and family planning opportunities have been combined with health care. But it is owed also to a general perception that the lowering of the birth rate is a real need of a modern family; and this perception would not have been possible without public education and enlightened discussion. The emergence of a resolute desire by Keralan women to be less shackled by continuous child-rearing is part of the process of the free formation of values and priorities.

The temptation to impose compulsory birth control arises when the government's view of needs differs from the views of the families themselves. Such a disjunction can lead to deeply disturbing results. Thus, while China has ended up with a birth rate similar to the birth rate of Kerala, one result of official coercion in China has been a much higher level of mortality among female children, quite unlike the situation in Kerala. The traditional "son preference" seems often to have led to extreme responses in China to compulsory birth control measures, including an increase in female infanticide and in the differential neglect of female children. These horrors must be counted among the consequences of a closed society in which the reduction in the birth rate is achieved without an open and educated discussion of personal and economic needs.

Political rights are important not only for the fulfillment of needs, they are crucial also for the formulation of needs. And this idea relates, in the end, to the respect that we owe each other as fellow human beings. In *Taking Leave*, William Cobbett observed that "we now frequently hear the working classes called 'the population,' just as we call animals upon a farm 'the stock.'" The importance of political rights for the understanding of economic needs turns ultimately on seeing human beings as people with rights to exercise, not as parts of a "stock" or a "population" that passively exists and must be looked after. What matters, finally, is how we see each other.

AMARTYA SEN is Lamont University Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University and the president of the American Economic Association.

Divided We Stand

BY MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM

The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories edited with commentary by William J. Bennett

(Simon & Schuster, 831 pp., $27.50)

How do we learn good character? Aristotle argued that we must begin with good "habits," meaning not mindless behavioral conditioning, but patterns of increasingly intelligent choice guided by attachment and love. A child is initiated into good choices, in the first place, through the love and the gratitude of family attachments. But as age brings greater independence and the need for greater critical discernment, a central role will be played by paradigmatic examples of virtue, and those examples will be given in poems, stories and dramas. Reflecting on these examples, often in the company of the parent, the child becomes increasingly adept at identifying real life situations that call for courage or friendliness or justice or generosity. And the fact that the child learns to associate these examples with intense love for the parent lends them a radiance that exercises, in later life, a special power.

William Bennett thinks that Aristotle is correct. He also believes that the project of forming good character can and should be undertaken in a democracy independently of political debate about the issues that divide us. Despite the many vexing issues that separate us, he argues, we can agree in a general way about the traits of character that distinguish a good person and a good citizen; and it should not be greatly controversial to say that these traits ought to include compassion, self-discipline, courage, honesty, perseverance, responsibility, the capacity for friendship, some sort of faith in goodness. And if we focus on the cultivation of these common traits, we will do better at the deliberative resolution of the divisive questions—better, for example, than if moral instruction is left entirely to religious or ethnic traditions that seem to differ about the fundamentals of morality.

In order to form character in this democratically shared way, Bennett continues, we must recover paradigms that we once shared as a nation, before the triviality of television absorbed most of our children's attention, and before a prevailing cynicism made virtue seem laughable. And for this we need to think Aristotelian thoughts about stories and poems, building a conception of "moral literacy" for citizenship by gathering for parents the inspiring and character-building exempla on which earlier generations of Americans cut their moral teeth. This anthology of poetry, fiction and philosophy is intended for parents to read with their children, selecting materials suited to the child's age and understanding.

Bennett's book comes wrapped up in a package that suggests a narrow ideological focus: a sentimental Norman Rockwellish cover, blurbs on the back from Margaret Thatcher (intelligent), Rush Limbaugh (abysmal), Roger Staubach. And of course Bennett's name

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will at once call to mind his bullying public manner and his unsubtle touch with many subtle issues. The reader may expect, therefore, crude moralism, and open the text eager to have a few laughs at Bennett's expense. This, it turns out, would be a big mistake. There is some awful stuff here, and there is some simplistic flag-waving stuff. But the project as a whole compels respect; and Bennett is revealed to be more complicated, and more passionately justice-driven, than many people will have understood him to be.

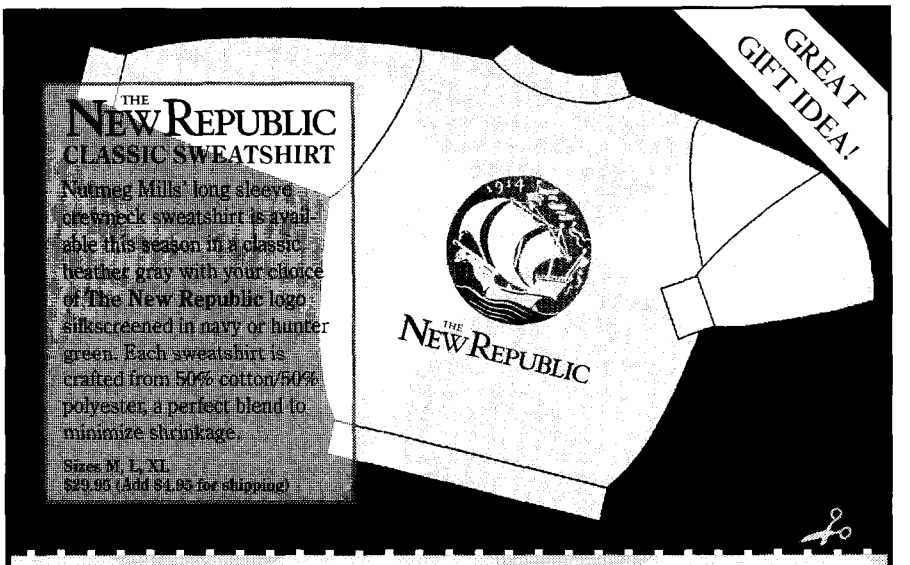
Let me put my cards on the table. I had an upbringing like the one that Bennett envisages. My father had many of Bennett's tastes in moral stories. He did not share, I hasten to add, the treacly Hallmark Card side of Bennett's pedagogy, but he certainly did share Bennett's emphasis on fortitude and sacrifice. To this day the smell of the sea is inexorably linked, for me, with an image of my father carrying me out to swim beyond the breakers, and both of these memories are bound up with William Ernest Henley's "Invictus" (a poem inexplicably omitted here). "Out of the night that covers me / Black as the pit from pole to pole": that severe pounding call to virtue, that joyful praise of the "unconquerable soul," is now forever mingled in my mind with the intense joy of those moments of love and adventure. So I agree with Bennett that these are the things that make one's responses to adversity. And if we let such lines be replaced by "Beavis and Butthead"—or, at a more elite level, by an aesthetic preference for ironic distancing—we will quickly become a nation impoverished in citizenship.

Anyone who remembers Bennett as an arch-foe of "multiculturalism" will be surprised to discover that this is a fairly multicultural book. To be sure, its heart is firmly in the Western tradition, and in the American tradition above all; but there are also African and Native American folktales, Hindu, Buddhist and Chinese texts, and very many works by, and about, women. The history of slavery and the history of race relations in the United States play a central role in the entire project. This material is scattered, and doesn't really succeed in conveying to children a sense of the world as a complex whole consisting of societies with richly different traditions. And yet there is the basic acknowledgment that "moral literacy" involves an acquaintance with the present and the past of other nations, and with the minorities within one's own nation. The reader experiences some astonishment, since the capacity to learn from his opponents never seemed to be one of Bennett's most salient traits. But there are even greater surprises in store as we proceed.

To illustrate the book's organization, which proceeds from the simple to the complex within each virtue, let me describe the section on compassion; it is among the best in the book, and a model of how such a project should be done. Bennett's introduction, in clear and simple language, presents the basic idea that compassion "is a virtue that takes seriously the reality of other persons, their inner lives, their emotions, as well as their external circumstances." Drawing deftly on Rousseau, Hume and Josiah Royce, Bennett argues that the power of compassion to put oneself in the place of another lies at "the very heart of moral awareness," and inspires the desire to relieve want and suffering. He concludes by pointing out that the major obstacles to compassion are the forces of "animosity and prejudice," including "the divisive 'isms'...: racism, sexism, chauvinism and the rest." Is this really the Bennett that liberals love to hate?

Bennett now takes his cue from Rousseau, and begins with tales of kindness to animals—continuing on through several folktales and fairy tales to James Baldwin's retelling of "Androcles and the Lion," Andersen's "Thumbelina" and "The Little Match Girl," a fine version of "Beauty and the Beast," the rescue of Moses, the Good Samaritan and, after other like things, on to the material for older children—Portia's speech on mercy, an extract from Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, a story by Tolstoy, O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," a poem by George Eliot—and, moving on to greater reflectiveness, Aristotle's analysis of pity from the *Rhetoric*. Next, introducing Whitman's powerful "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night," Bennett observes that "true compassion runs deeper than the kind of grief in which we know only our own pain from another's death. True compassion seeks to understand ... the tragedy dealt to a life suddenly lost." In the spirit of that thought, we turn to Lincoln's wonderful letter of consolation to Mrs. Bixby, who lost five sons to the Union cause; then to Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!" and, expanding the scope of reflection to the general idea of poverty and need, Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus." The material is enticing for the young reader, exhilarating for the more mature one.

The section ends with a remarkable extract from Tocqueville, which argues that compassion will not flourish where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institutions do not work against hierarchy. For if people are not made equal by laws and institutions, how will they come to see themselves in one another, or view themselves and their fellow citizens as vulnerable to misfortune in similar ways? Thus American democracy, with its leveling of distinctions, offers the fairest hope for the virtue of compassion, for "the more equal social conditions become, the more do men display this reciprocal disposition to oblige each other."

Bennett's preface to the passage concludes: "... we are forced to ask ourselves: How does modern America measure up to the portrait he painted more than a century and a half ago?" The child who gets to this thought—by a path that has led her through the Civil War and the anti-slavery cause and the ethnic migrations of the early twentieth century—will have a lot of questions here. (And not only the questions about race and ethnicity that Bennett repeatedly raises, but also questions about gender that he raises less frequently, questions about poverty and class that he raises only indirectly, and questions about sexual orientation about which he is completely silent.) How indeed have our institutions promoted, or failed to promote, the kind of equality that makes compassionate citizenship possible?

This sort of questioning is evidently what Bennett, in his Aristotelian mode, means by virtue. This is a conception of civic virtue that may seem to some readers difficult to square with the politics of Rush Limbaugh and Margaret Thatcher. But his book is not always this interesting. There is the problem, for a start, of Bennett's uneven judgment about poetry. There are many fine things, from Donne and Shakespeare to Blake and Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson and Tennyson and Walt Whitman to Yeats and Frost. And Bennett is right to feel that some lesser classics, such as Emerson's "Concord Hymn" and Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus," are still morally powerful. Let us grant him, too, his decision to stick to the past. (He cites the staggeringly high fees charged to reprint recent verse. Could this be the vice of stinginess?) But, even granting Bennett his premises, there is entirely too much poetry of the sentimental school—sometimes by reputable figures (Longfellow's "The Children's Hour") and sometimes by writers of doggerel such as Ella Wheeler Wilcox ("Laugh, and the world laughs with you"), the deservedly obscure Laura E. Richards ("To the Little Girl Who Wriggles") and above all the rebarbative Edgar Guest ("Only a dad with a tired face, / Coming home from the daily race").

To paraphrase Wilde, one would have to have a stomach of stone to read these lines without nausea. If we took out all dross of this sort, we would have room for Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," Blake's "Jerusalem," Stephen Spender's "I think continually of those who were truly great," Dylan Thomas's "Do not Go Gently," Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting"—and even for poems in which the child who wishes to think more about religion can get a sense of what religious joy may be in a life, at a level deeper than banality. There are peculiar prose omissions, too (no Thoreau, no Mill, no Gandhi), that could be remedied by a corresponding excision of banalities.

But the large amount of *Reader's Digest* material is not just an accident. I have so far described Bennett's project as Aristotelian. This is true, but not the whole story. Bennett has another side. It would be too imprecise, and too flattering, to call this other side Tolstoyan, but Tolstoy's argument in *What Is Art?* comes to mind. This other side of Bennett is exercised less by the ideal of an education aimed at reflective habits of choice and passion, and more by a conviction of moral simplicity, by a view of art as a force that unites people across divisions of race, gender, religion and class through the simple power of basic moral sentiments. This side of Bennett is closer to the populist, demagogic, eternal-verities sort of conservatism by which he made his name.

And so Bennett is divided against himself. The complicating Aristotelian ideal and the simplifying populist ideal are deadly rivals, and Bennett, complicated character that he turns out to be, is pulled this way and that between them. In *The Book of Virtues*, one comes upon a kind of vulgar Tolstoyanism for Americans, according to which virtue entails a rejection of the complex and formally exacting in art and in ethics, a rejection of all that cannot be readily grasped by a child's simple faith. According to this conception, the moral poetry of Hopkins and Eliot and Owen and Spender—and even Donne, Blake and Whitman, who are currently included—will have to go, to be replaced by Edgar Guest and Kipling and Service and (a superficial reading of) Frost.

Thus, the rhetorical complexities of Whitman's "Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty ... / the gentle soft-born measureless light" must yield before "Only a dad, but he gives his all / To smooth the way for his children small." For Whitman's stanza works on many levels, weaving its metaphysical *and* political *and* sensuous tapestry in language that challenges and divides, divides not only the educated reader from the naïve reader, but also the reader who fought for the end of slavery from the reader who did not, the reader who thinks Whitman's radical democratic thoughts through to their conclusion from the reader who does not. Guest's homily, by contrast, does not divide, because it does not reach very deep into the recesses of personality, because its language is too bland to promote real thought. Poetry of this sort is a safe accomplice of conventional and unexamined moral assumptions. It prefers an easy unity of feeling to the hard puzzles of moral reflection.

Similarly, the philosophical complexities of Tocqueville and Aristotle and Aquinas and Plato and Rousseau give way in many parts of Bennett's book, and not only the parts intended for younger children, before folktales whose moral lessons are easily available to the untrained intellect. For philosophical argument, like really good poetry, also divides, in the sense that it requires an exacting effort of mind, and promises no single, shared destination, no end to perplexity. It asks instead that the shared sentiments be subjected to the rigorous scrutiny of reason. And this is precisely the scrutiny that the simplifying populist must mistrust.

Aristotelian moral art, by contrast, begins from the idea that the moral life is an enormously difficult affair that requires us to cultivate great powers of discrimination, and surprising precision in passion. It originates not in faith but in wonder, at the complexity and the variety of life and of oneself. And this wonder is linked with joy, for the Aristotelian finds complexity and variety to be sources of delight, not sources of disgust. The real-life heterogeneity of human moral action is welcomed as a challenge to understanding and empathy, not banished as a barrier to a comforting sensation of certainty and unity. And wonder is also linked with a love of logic and clarity, with the conviction that rigorous thinking is the right way for a human being to respond to the mysteries of life. What an Aristotelian, not least an Aristotelian in America, wants from art is not, then, anything simple. Her interest in wonder will make her seek out and embrace poetry that sends a chill down the spine or makes tears stand in the eyes. And she will insist on combining poetic education with philosophical argument, knowing that even very young children make distinctions, and that it is never

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too soon to warn the young not to take moral truths on trust.

Bennett's book, as I say, is essentially torn between these poles. Thus the reader may be going along reading the Tolstoy-approved folktales and hymn lyrics, and suddenly find herself in the middle of Whitman or Shakespeare or Donne. Here are texts that testify to a simple, uniting type of faith, and there is Jefferson's instruction to his nephew that he examine the stories of miracles in the Bible exactly as he would scrutinize similar tales in the histories of Livy or Tacitus. And this tension in Bennett is closely linked to another one, between political quietism and a prophetic demand for justice.

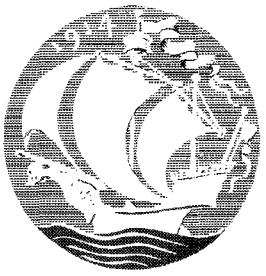
The Tolstoyan conception supports, on the whole, a moral conservatism and a simple optimism about possibilities. Perseverance and loyalty and compassion and brotherhood are all at its core; but not the impassioned struggle for earthly justice. For if, indeed, the core of the moral life is a simple faith that can be conveyed to all without the rigors of education, then the struggle to extend educational opportunities bulks less large in one's idea of society; and if rich and poor, free and slave, peasant and landowner can alike attain to the summit of the moral life, and if the moral life is the core of our earthly life, then, once again, these differences seem to make little difference. The Aristotelian conception, by contrast, with its emphasis on the complexity of living well, the need for exacting education and the importance of material conditions for education and hence for virtue, supports a vigilant activism toward the equal extension of these possibilities for personal cultivation and for citizenship. (Aristotle himself, of course, did not extend these possibilities to women and slaves; but his approach to human capability has radical social implications.)

Thus it should come as no surprise to discover that this book, which announces from the start its determination to convey optimism and hope, wavers between a *Reader's Digest* optimism about the moral life and a more strenuous hopefulness. Simple patriotism and crude flag-worship are certainly in evidence, but there are also signs of a more exacting ideal. Bennett is repeatedly drawn to—almost obsessed by—stories of people who risk their lives or safety for a cause they believe to be right: Nathan Hale facing death at the hands of the British, Father Maximilian Kolbe volunteering to die in Auschwitz to save a stranger's life, Martin Luther proclaiming his defiance of his adversaries and his faith in his "mighty fortress," Mary Wollstonecraft asserting the dignity of Reason against the forces of prejudice, Susan B. Anthony fighting for the right to vote.

There is social radicalism in this brand of courage. Bennett knows it, and it grips him. Even his flag-waving has its radical side. His central exhibit here is Barbara Fritchie, who defied Stonewall Jackson out of her dedication to the Union: this was not knee-jerk patriotic sentiment, it was reasoned heroic defiance, connected to a moral imperative against slavery. Beneath his book's stale veneer of conservatism (and even inside it, as we see in the story of Vice Admiral Stockdale reading Epictetus in the POW camp so that he won't betray his men), it is this sort of heroic defiance for the sake of the just that Bennett most passionately wants to impart to his young reader. Bennett's public persona has often suggested an indifference to the claims of the weak, but here he is revealed, decisively if unevenly, to be profoundly concerned with justice and equality.

He is preoccupied, in particular, with the history of slavery, and he takes the struggle for racial equality in this nation with a seriousness that undercuts many of the book's more complacent utterances. The story of Harriet Tubman, writings of Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington and Lincoln, the story of Rosa Parks, writings of Martin Luther King: these are all to be found in Bennett's pages, and they promote a prophetic indignation about complacency, and encourage the young to reflect that conventional pieties may not be the stuff of true virtue. Introducing Douglass's scorching indictment of American conduct—"There is not a nation of savages, there is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States at this very hour"—Bennett writes, "Here is a brave soul holding America accountable for its sins." Will Bennett's conservative following be pleased by this judgment?

Sometimes Bennett tries to reconcile this prophetic tradition with the conservative tradition by suggesting that these American trespasses are all in the past, that we can now all feel good for having gone beyond them. But he cannot really accept this, for he has a sound instinct for the presence of injustice, and a love of the liberty of mind that confronts it. This tension emerges in an especially fascinating way in his treatment of Martin Luther King. The "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" and the "I Have a Dream" speech are quoted in full, and Bennett's prefaces confer upon their author a central stature in our national history. On the other hand, Bennett concludes his introduction to the "Dream" speech this



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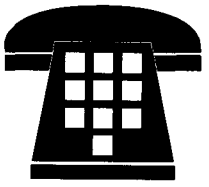

THE NEW REPUBLIC

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way: "His soaring refrain of 'I have a dream' still inspires the American conscience. His perseverance and eloquence were rewarded." Where, pray tell? In this world, or in the next?

But then the reader reads the speech, and is encouraged by the paradoxical nature of Bennett's own preface to linger over the following lines: "We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one.... No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." So the message once again is: question, be brave, take risks for justice, do not be satisfied.

Bennett's book contains a more Aristotelian vision of virtue and a more prophetic vision of America than its packaging lets on; and his ambivalence about this vision is itself an American ambivalence. For this country is historically and essentially divided between a desire to live by simple sentiments and a strict love of liberty. I hope that the parents who use this collection will remind their children, in Martin Luther King's words, that they "stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice," and that the threshold is still warm. Then they might skip "Only a Dad" and substitute a reading of "Invictus," or Blake's "Jerusalem."

MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM is a professor of philosophy at Brown University.

The Verdi Blues

BY JOSEPH KERMAN

Verdi: A Biography by Mary Jane Phillips-Matz

(Oxford University Press, 941 pp., $45)

Compare, as the old school examinations used to say, and contrast Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi. Born in the same year, 1813, and granted long, fulfilled lives, they dominated opera in their respective spheres and, each in his own astonishing way, reinvigorated the genre as a political instrument of the greatest power. Both were notorious characters, literally legends in their own lifetimes. Both made lasting, sustaining second marriages with remarkable women. A significant amount of what they both reported about their early lives was calculated to mislead biographers.

Both men were rebels, consumed with rage at the theatrical conditions of their time and place. This cannot be overestimated as a driving force behind their art as well as their day-to-day existence. Wagner's way of dealing with his rage was to generalize it into active rejection of bourgeois culture *tout court*, with fateful results spread out in ten volumes of *Gesammelte Schriften*. When praxis was called for, he took part in Dresden's rebellion in 1849 and got himself banished from effective concourse with the opera world that he hated. Not very practical in the short term, it must have seemed, but brilliantly practical over the long haul of history.

Verdi's rage at the theater was less public than Wagner's, though he never hesitated to write to newspapers when it suited his purpose. He vented his rage in letters of almost unbearable ferocity and despair, and dealt with it time and time again by fighting the opera establishment in the trenches. Impossible to skip in Mary Jane Phillips-Matz's lengthy new biography is the dense, searing documentation of Verdi's struggle in dozens, scores, hundreds of premieres and revivals: a struggle with impresarios who tried to bend contracts, publishers who cheated him, intermediaries who lied to him, librettists who slowed him down, singers who got sick on him (or said they did), conductors who cut his operas and inserted numbers from *Norma*, audiences less than instantly enthusiastic about his admittedly novel scores, official censors doing their thing, critics doing theirs and even (at least in Paris) insolent pit musicians. Lured to Naples in 1858 for the premiere of *Un ballo in maschera* by assurances that the censors had passed an already heavily compromised version of the libretto, Verdi withdrew the opera when he found that they had not done so. At the height of his fame, his passport was lifted, and he had to sit around for weeks penning a ninety-page brief for breach of contract.

Both men were forced to wait, though only Wagner sensed that he was biding his time. Banished from the theater, Wagner created in his head a new ideal kind of opera entirely on his own terms, and called it "music drama." For fifteen years, broken only by the revised (and rejected) *Tannhäuser* for Paris, Wagner had no new work produced. In that same period—the period between *Lohengrin* (1850) and *Tristan und Isolde* (1865)—Verdi oversaw ten premieres. The list runs from *Stiffelio*, which finally reached the Metropolitan Opera this year, through the unstoppable trio *Rigoletto*, *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, to *La forza del destino* in its original version for St. Petersburg.

Verdi fought for his operas time and time again; yet from the very start he acted out his love-hate relationship with the theater by gestures of withdrawal. That is the meaning of the famous fairy tale he told about giving up after the fiasco of *Un giorno di regno*, his second opera, only to be drawn back by a near-magical coincidence (with the impresario Merelli playing the unlikely role of good fairy). After the success of his next opera, *Nabucco*, the composer promised himself he would work like a galley-slave for ten years, then retire.

His model must have been Rossini. Yet when the ten years were up, even though the retirement nest was purchased, the promise seems to have evaporated. Seven years later, however, after *Ballo*, he produced no music for four years. And after the triumph of *Aida* in 1871, after another dozen years, he really did quit. He was in his late 50s. Verdi outlived Wagner by eighteen years. Finally history, in the persons of the publisher Giulio Ricordi and the poet Arrigo Boito, came to him and begged, connived and cajoled him to write opera entirely on his own terms. *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893) were his first new operas since *Aida*.

Both men built: Verdi with his own money, Wagner with other people's money. Bayreuth, of course, remains one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the history of the arts. Verdi built a hospital in the village of Villanova sull'Arda and a retirement home for indigent musicians, the Casa di Riposo, in Milan. Like Bayreuth, they are still in operation, though very seldom in the news.

Verdi also built in another, more primal way. His ancestors had owned land at Sant'Agata, a tiny village near Busseto, like his birthplace Roncole, and before he was 40 he bought a fine farm there for his retirement, which he threatened to commence at any time, as we have already seen. When he was able to plunge into work on the farm, between

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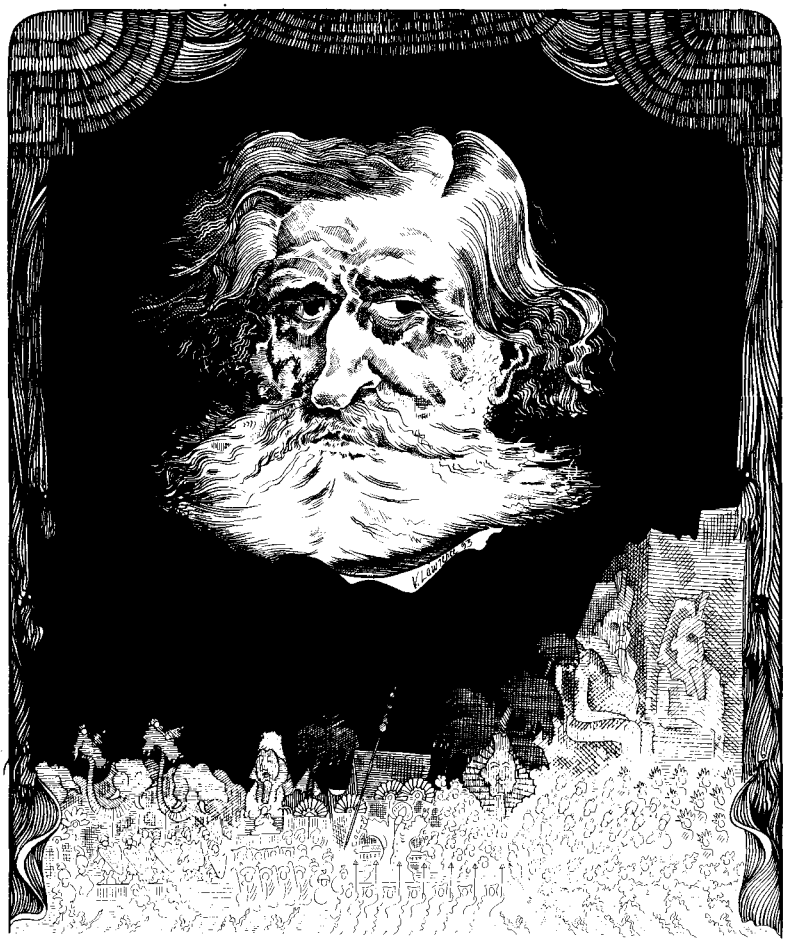
his many trips to supervise opera productions, the stomach pains that had plagued his galley-slave years disappeared. Soon the new landowner launched into an unnerving twenty-year remodeling program that transformed the farmhouse, the farm lands, the garden, the irrigation system, indeed the entire watershed. Atheist Verdi even added a chapel. He supervised every detail obsessively, often spending the hours from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. on the estate, except for meals and a one-hour nap. On his next visit to Villa Sant'Agata, Angelo Mariani, the leading Italian conductor of the day, is instructed in a letter to bring a marble statue, a hunting rifle and a dozen *magnolia grandiflora* plants between one meter and one and a half meters in height, wrapped in straw; the next letter changes that to fourteen. More here to contrast with Wagner, certainly, than to compare.

Mary Jane Phillips-Matz has written the most thorough and authoritative biography of Verdi available in English, or in any other language. It is nearly 750 pages long, plus ample back matter; in the front, some 200 individuals and institutions are thanked for assisting the author in the dogged, loving enterprise that she began in the 1950s. The book is jammed with newly discovered material from public (though in many cases little-known) archives, private libraries and on-the-ground research. It makes slow but fascinating reading.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Fascinating, but also rather sad. Verdi was a chronic depressive, and Giuseppina Strepponi grew more and more despondent over the fifty years that she lived with him as mistress and wife. Verdi was enormously successful, as composer and as farmer; he became enormously rich and universally honored; he was the recipient of extravagant love and devotion from a great variety of people, ranging from his wife, his father-in-law and his faithful student and factotum Emanuele Muzio to a rich circle of friends, as many of them outside the music profession as in it. Yet the tenor of his letters is almost universally bleak. It is the failures—fewer and fewer as the years go on—that gnaw at him, the betrayals, the decline of art, the corruption of morals.

It is especially sad to read about Verdi's life after reading about Wagner's in, say, the 1983 biography by Martin Gregor-Dallin, let alone in the composer's own *My Life* or the fat volumes of Cosima Wagner's diaries. Whatever else they were, the Wagners were glad for themselves.

We judge Verdi from his letters, and no doubt he was more likely to take pen in hand when he was angry or disgusted. (When he was feeling good, he would rather plant magnolias or shoot quail.) Yet most of the letters had to be written anyway, and the dour tone that surfaces in them was more than a pose, more than a crusty epistolary image cultivated by the Bear of Busseto. It has been known for some time that the bear could behave like a boor or a brute toward his wife, his servants and his friends like Mariani, who he felt had betrayed him. Relations with Busseto were so bad that Verdi's neighbors occasionally killed his cats, and the much-traveled composer would take long detours to avoid the little town's coach stop. Small-town spite goes a long way; yet it is also clear that for years Verdi never took even the smallest step toward reconciliation.

What outraged the Bussettini was that their favorite (but very unappreciative) son was living among them with the soprano Strepponi, living seclusively without so much as saying whether they were married. Strepponi and Verdi went back together a long way. A woman of the greatest intelligence and spirit, launching a highly promising career, she had helped the young composer when he needed help most, with his very first opera, *Oberto*, in 1839. (*Oberto* was what Italians call a *successo discréto*; it did reasonably well.) In 1842 she created the role of Abagaille in *Nabucco*, Verdi's first *successo di fanatismo*. By then she had already ruined her voice by singing on stage almost continuously for eight years, and through several pregnancies, which Phillips-Matz has over the years researched thoroughly. Later Verdi and Strepponi fell in love. Marriage would have exposed Verdi to claims from the three children Strepponi had abandoned at orphanages, and was now supporting. He brought her to Busseto, where she was very far from welcome, and in effect parked her there, since it was awkward to have her around when he was traveling.

The knot was finally tied in 1859 (in which year, Phillips-Matz notes, her first-born and only male child, Camillo, reached his majority). But the marriage was a troubled one, and in bad times Giuseppina would start a rueful little diary, abandoned a few days later. It was for her eyes alone, of course, as opposed to Cosima Wagner's diary, better described as an admiring chronicle of Life with R., and definitely designed for posterity. Still, Giuseppina's abortive diaries were not destroyed, not all of them, at any rate. They tell of her growing isolation and depression, which reached a peak during the elderly composer's four-year affair with Teresa Stolz, the star of *Aida* and the *Requiem*.

Unlike some of Verdi's earlier biogra-

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phers, Phillips-Matz clearly doesn't believe that Giuseppina may have had nothing to worry about, but it is not her way to offer dramatic revelations, or even novel interpretations. Her way is rather to pile up details of new circumstantial evidence. In a previously unpublished letter, Verdi makes hotel arrangements so that he, Giuseppina and Stolz can take meals together in the Verdis' room. The hotel where Stolz stayed in Cremona, near Sant'Agata, is on a street that has since been renamed Via Verdi. Phillips-Matz also reprints in full the astoundingly scurrilous newspaper articles that appeared about the affair. One has to sympathize with all of the principals, but on the evidence of the paper trail it is the two women who gain our respect, not Verdi. Things must have reached a showdown in 1876; there are rumors of wrenching scenes. Stolz retreated to St. Petersburg, where she accepted a long singing engagement.

Giuseppina continued to love Verdi, as did so many others around him. Probably it came too late. We know little about his relations as a child with his parents, and what we do know suggests not love but conflict. His father, Carlo Verdi, was a vestry official for the local parish, conspicuous in his old age for piety. Never so the son: at age 7, serving as altar boy at Mass, he cursed the priest out loud—"may you be struck by lightning!"—when he was cuffed for inattention. (This anecdote, one of very few about young Verdi, doubtless owes its survival to the lightning that actually struck this same priest eight years later.)

At some time between the ages of 10 and 15, the precocious boy musician was taken under the wing of the merchant Antonio Barezzi, Busseto's premier *mélomane*. Barezzi financed his education in Milan and masterminded his early career, and when the time came actually gave him his daughter in marriage. (She died, alas, less than four years later.) While dozens of letters over years attest to the mutual bond between Verdi and the man who is always spoken of as his second father, what the senior Verdis thought about all this is not recorded, though there are intimations of friction between Carlo Verdi and Barezzi. Later Verdi was involved with his father in property transactions, not a good omen; and in view of the importance that Villa Sant'Agata came to assume for Verdi, it was disastrous for him to have purchased it on behalf of his parents, whom he then had to turn out when he determined to move in himself, two years later.

This was in 1851, a very bad year. Chapter 17 of this book, imperturbably entitled "November 1850-Spring 1851," proves to be a humdinger. In *Rigoletto* Verdi knew that he had his best libretto to date, but the battle with the censors in Venice almost drove him to distraction. Giuseppina was in great distress for reasons of her own. Verdi drew up papers for legal separation from his parents, who were sick at the time, and shortly after he rousted them from Sant'Agata his mother died. It is hard to know what appalled Busseto more, Verdi's flaunting of his relationship with Strepponi or his unfeeling behavior toward his parents.

Also, Phillips-Matz has discovered another child abandoned by Strepponi (at the orphanage in Cremona) in April 1851. Conceivably it was her sister's, or a servant's. But if it was hers, as is most likely, that would go a long way to explain the passions displayed by all the actors in this unhappy drama. Phillips-Matz does not make it clear whether Verdi was reconciled with his father, who died in 1867, the same year as Barezzi. Verdi was not at his deathbed.

Interestingly, the very few things we hear about Verdi as a boy and an adolescent closely confirm what we know about the man. He was very talented, and very shy (meaning depressed?); he worked very hard, and he wore a beard (meaning that he was a rebel, in both personal and political terms, for a beard proclaimed one's allegiance to Mazzini at a time when all serious men in Milan, it is said, shaved from nose to throat). Rebellion expressed itself in his adherence to the anti-clerical party in Busseto; this composer became (and was manipulated as) a symbol of local anti-clericalism long before he became famous as the symbol of national liberation. Also rebellious was that fierce independence that made him insist, for example, that it was nobody's business if he chose to install himself in one of Busseto's finest *palazzi* with a loose woman.

Most profoundly, I think, Verdi's defiance played itself out in what I have called his love-hate relationship with the theater. Constraints on his self-defined image of opera, whether political, institutional or merely the result of someone's personal weakness or venality, drove him into fury or depression. At 71 he is still writing of "that prison that other people call the theater" and raging about audiences past and present: "I wore armor, and, ready to be shot, cried: 'Let's fight!' And they were truly battles always! Battles that never left me satisfied, even when I won!! Sad! Sad!" Clearly his alternating revulsion and attraction to the theater, his withdrawals and his returns, were for Verdi an allegory of life and death. When he reminisced about *Un giorno di regno*, his memory played him false by conflating that fiasco with the death of his first wife and his two children. Locked into this grim syndrome, Verdi nonetheless found the resource to create for himself an alternative life *in* death, which was life at Sant'Agata.

What unlocked the syndrome for Verdi, however, was not Sant'Agata. It was composing opera entirely on his own terms, and in his own time. Approached (on tiptoe) to compose *Otello* in 1879, Verdi pondered, dawdled and positively courted distractions before completing it in 1887: a period interrupted by the far from inconsiderable task of revising *Simon Boccanegra*, which he polished off in six weeks! *Otello*, as is well known, marks an extraordinary advance over his previous work in dramatic profundity and musical sophistication. With so robust a composer as Verdi, perhaps the most vivid marker of this is the way he now learned to cultivate understatement—in, say, Iago's narration of Cassio's Dream in Act II. Starting like a diatonic barcarole ("honest Iago") touched by a single sleepy chromaticism, this piece turns into a pornographic nightmare as chromatics seep deeper and deeper into an evil parody of aria form. Balancing phrases begin their orderly modulations, only to drop disconcertingly back to the tonic; the opening vocal music returns ambivalently in the orchestra, accompanying Iago's devious mumbling. The orchestra sums up the growing chromaticism in a pianissimo sequence of dizzying sensuousness.

Whenever Iago quotes Cassio talking in his sleep, he quotes a weirdly transformed recollection of Monterone's curse in *Rigoletto*. Certainly this evoked,

On This Morning of Grief

Cupped in your hands you bring me
an abandoned wrens' nest—
exquisite in miniature
the fine-woven grasses like silk,
moss that's still green,
soiled string, milkweed seed, white cat fur—
and in the precise center a hollow
and in the hollow a single eggshell
from which life
has pecked its way free, and flown:
smaller than my smallest fingernail,
delicately brown-speckled—
the egg's halves parted
like an eye on the verge of opening.

JOYCE CAROL OATES

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invented dream, this phantasmagoria that enchants, drugs Otello, is utterly un-Wagnerian. It is equally certain that only one composer of the time could have done anything as rich and subtle in musical terms, and as powerful in dramatic terms—the recently deceased composer of *Parsifal.*

And *Falstaff* is an inconceivable quantum leap past *Otello.* Musicologists have long yearned to see the composer's musical sketches for these works, if they have been preserved. Phillips-Matz and some other scholars have had access to unknown Verdi letters and other script materials at Sant'Agata, and recently the Verdi heirs have been working with the Verdi Institute at Parma to release his musical documents.

What did composing on his own terms (this is my formulation, of course, not his) mean to Verdi? It did not mean the development of a new kind of opera, a new theater, like music drama at Bayreuth. It meant negotiation with the theater world as it existed, but negotiation on Verdi's own terms. To take a simple (perhaps an oversimple) example: in *Falstaff* Verdi nearly completed his campaign against the aria, the most venerable symbol of opera's formality and artificiality. The title character is given no aria, only a diminutive canzonetta (which has proved susceptible, however, to encores); Ford gets a dramatic monologue; Mistress Quickly, a brief, free solo number; and Nannetta in her disguise as the Queen of Fairies, a song with chorus. Only Fenton, the tenor, gets an actual aria, a gift-offering to the opera audience, and also a wry acknowledgment that his voice then as now is the one irrevocably marked operatic. As to artifice, Fenton's aria is set to a sonnet. And lest these little jokes, among so many in *Falstaff,* seem too esoteric, Fenton is made to relinquish the end of his aria to Nannetta, and when he tries to recoup by singing along with her, the two of them are unceremoniously cut short by Alice, the operatic (or, rather, anti-operatic) Mistress Ford.

Even Quickly's brief, free solo number (the delightful "Giunta all' Allbergo della Giaretteria" in Act II, scene ii) was not part of Verdi's original conception. The mezzo-soprano who created the role, Giuseppina Pasqua, is pictured in one of the rare photos accompanying this new biography. When she auditioned with Verdi and he explained to her that she would have no solos, she assured him she didn't mind, she was so honored to have been chosen by the maestro for the *Falstaff* premiere. Still, Verdi wrote afterward, he could tell that *in petto* she was disappointed, and he added the solo. Was this because he was impressed by Pasqua's high G, or because he sensed that a happy mezzo would make the role go better than an honored but slightly unhappy one? Verdi's earlier love-hate relationship with the theater is distilled into an ironic, fruitful ambivalence.

In any case, *Otello* and *Falstaff* seemed finally to have calmed Verdi's demons. He was never happier nor, it seems, more vigorous. He busied himself with the estate and his building projects, and shuttled back and forth between Sant'Agata, his winter home in Genoa, and Milan, accompanied by Giuseppina, even though she now had trouble getting around and was frequently ill. Teresa Stolz, who never married, was back in the picture; doubtless the relationship was very different from what it was in the 1870s, but Giuseppina may well have felt that after winning the battle she had lost the war. Phillips-Matz may think that, too—she does not quite say—for as her narrative winds to its conclusion, Verdi's wife plays less and less of a role in it. She died in 1897. Phillips-Matz prints warm, affectionate letters written by Verdi to Stolz after that time. Stolz assisted at Verdi's deathbed vigil in 1901; she died a year later.

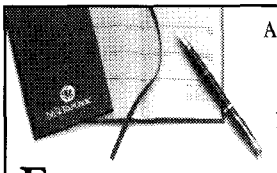
As I have indicated, Phillips-Matz is conservative when it comes to interpreting her sources—more conservative than I think she needs to be, though in today's climate of biography, many readers may want to stand up and cheer her for erring on the right side. Writing what will certainly become the standard biography, she earns our gratitude for an acute sense of responsibility in the matter of coverage and objectivity. Her central chronicle of Verdi's personal and professional life is richly supported by accounts of his lineage, the impact of the various Italian wars on the Po valley, his parliamentary career (he started out attending every session for two months), staff lists and pay scales at Sant'Agata, his prodigious charities, his impossibly tangled business dealings with Paris and much else, including a full inventory of Carlo and Giuseppe Verdi's land holdings. Something of a specialty for Phillips-Matz is the ferreting out of vital statistics for all the minor players in her epic drama.

This said, it should also be said that hers is not a book that gets into the deeper reaches of Verdi's personality. Verdi's politics are discussed at due length, but with little nuance, and his intellectual development is scarcely addressed: the process by which his artistic ideals were formed and projected first into his libretti, then into his scores. Anyone who might be interested in possible resonances between Verdi's biography and the themes treated repeatedly in his operas—jealousy, anti-clericalism, fathers and daughters, fathers and sons—will have to look for them elsewhere.

Indeed, the content of the operas is reported only sporadically. We are not told, for example, of the topsy-turvy reversal of values between the original, St. Petersburg version of *La forza del destino* and its revision in 1869. The version we know ends with Don Alvaro's conversion in a pious haze of high strings that would have gladdened the heart of Carlo Verdi. In the original version, Alvaro jumps off a cliff declaiming of death, the devil and the end of the world.

The great strength of this new biography is the author's comprehensive sweep, her first-hand knowledge of Verdi's world and her control of a vast store of documentary evidence, much of it new. She provides us with a new, solid basis for addressing the numerous questions that still remain regarding the life and works of Giuseppe Verdi.

JOSEPH KERMAN is professor of music at the University of California, Berkeley and author of, among other books, *Write All These Down* (forthcoming from University of California Press).



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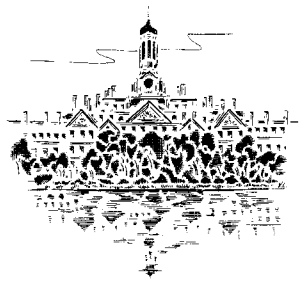
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

A star is born

LONG AGO, IN THE SECOND grade at a public school in New York, I played the star of Bethlehem in a Christmas pageant. I do not recall being traumatized by this event. It certainly didn't diminish my attachments to the Jews or to Judaism. If anything, it may have steeled my sense of being different and of coming from a different tradition. Of course, it also introduced me to the idea that Christmas was about a miracle and not about presents. Longtime TNR readers can judge whether exposure to this miracle at an impressionable age has damaged my independence or identity. Today such a pageant would not be possible in what is called common public space. The Constitution—or the Court wearing its garb—now protects minorities from the deepest convictions of the majority and also protects the majority from itself. At least this is the case when it comes to religious belief. Ethnicity and race, yes; God, no. People do somersaults to satisfy every component of what makes us diverse, however thin. But what truly gives American diversity its abiding depth—beyond dying languages, jokes and culinary habits—is how we do and do not worship God, how we deal with fear and trembling, and this increasingly has no place in the curriculum or in democratic discourse. I would even guess that there are many colleges in the country whose catalogs, laden with the typical gruel of multiculturalism, list scarcely a course treating Augustine and Aquinas, to say nothing of Maimonides.

EVERY FALL THE AMERICAN CIVIL Liberties Union, sometimes joined in court by the American Jewish Congress, tries not exactly to keep Jesus out of the manger, but to keep his manger out of the town square. This has been a good time for the casuists. Remember: secular is O.K. A manger with reindeer and Santa Claus is secular, at least in some jurisdictions. Without them, it violates the Establishment Clause. A Christmas tree with a Hanukkah menorah at its side may also be secular. (In Falls Church, Virginia, Hanukkah is a secular holiday all by itself.) But these symbols are not of equal weight. Xmas is secular, but Christmas is not. I learn this from an article in *The Harvard Crimson*. Some Jewish students at Harvard, though probably not all that many (and others, too), have been much vexed by the appearance of Christmas trees in the dining halls. Last year a young faculty member made a fuss about a toaster restricted to the use of students who eat only kosher food. So it's tit for tat, so to speak. Those vexed by such things, I'd surmise, are usually insecure in their own identity and not very knowledgeable about it. After all, a Christmas tree cannot threaten a people that survived the Inquisition. And in America, thank God (if I'm allowed to), the Inquisition has not yet taken place. Perhaps the most fortunate feature of American Christianity—in all *its* theological diversity—is that it has been remarkably tolerant of real diversity, even when it has been tested by all kinds of alien ideas and behaviors. If, in our time, this defining tolerance has shown some signs of fraying, it is because a similar tolerance is increasingly denied to Christians at whose initiative we were all first welcomed.



BIG NEWS. THE VATICAN IS ABOUT to recognize the State of Israel. It is a measure of the insecurity of the Jews that they should still be so pleased that the pope has at last conceded their nationhood, as if his assent were needed to validate the proposition. In this, however, he is very late, coming just after Yasir Arafat. The exchange of representation with the Holy See is, in my view, about as important for Israel as the exchange now occuring with, say, Hanoi, and there is far more worldly consequence to the latter. If, however, there is otherworldly consequence in the exchange with the Holy See it is mainly apposite for the Church which, despite the embittered opposition of successive Holy Fathers, has now accepted the Jewish return to the land called holy and the Jewish sovereignty over it. Gone is the excuse about waiting for a political solution to the dispute over Jerusalem. The accord implicitly acknowledges that the Mount of Olives, the hill of Golgotha, the pool of Bethesda, the garden of Gethsemane are parts of modern Israel. These are places of Christian memory linked in our minds to Jesus and his apostles. But they are no longer places of true Christian witness. Except for their industrious caretakers, they are without an ongoing Christian life. Islam has seen to that. It's Israel, therefore, to which the Vatican looks to assure free access of the faithful to the holy sites and the right to build and maintain churches. Not that this access was recently denied. Only from 1949 to 1967, when Jordan occupied east Jerusalem and the West Bank, were these freedoms in abeyance. Here is a prophecy: wherever in the holy land there will be Palestine there will be even fewer Christians. The career of Christianity is far harder in the world of the Muslims than it is even in secular America.

THE ED ROLLINS SCANDAL HAS petered out for lack of evidence. The evidence required would have been the testimony of black ministers saying that they were on the take to keep their congregants from going to the polls. Where there is a corrupter there is a corruptee. I don't know whether there were such complicit ministers but, if there were, they haven't come forward. In fact, a few black ministers in the orbit of Jesse Jackson filed some sort of class action libel suit against Rollins. The truth about this one will never be known. But it's only logical that if one candidate wants to stimulate high voter turnout from one voting bloc, his opponent would want to keep that turnout low. In any case, it's artifically induced turnout that is more of a danger to democracy than stay-at-homes. A high turnout certainly is not an index of social and political health, as the voting numbers in the old Soviet Union or in present-day Iraq would show. In fact, as the shoe-pinch theory of government argues, low turnout suggests that the shoe doesn't pinch. And of course, neither of the parties wants high voter turnout in general. What each wants is high participation only from those cohorts whose voting habits are predictable, loyal and safe. The campaign finance laws encourage these voter mobilization drives by exempting contributions to such efforts from the usual limits. But targeting these folk is targeting those who care little and know less. At best they come out to vote because the candidate or party whose lever they will pull has made a plausible pecuniary promise. At worst they go to the polls out of resentments, right and left, white and black. It once was that you had to be marginally literate in English to qualify to vote. No longer. Politicians now register voters in jails. Anyone will do. Or will he?

MARTIN PERETZ

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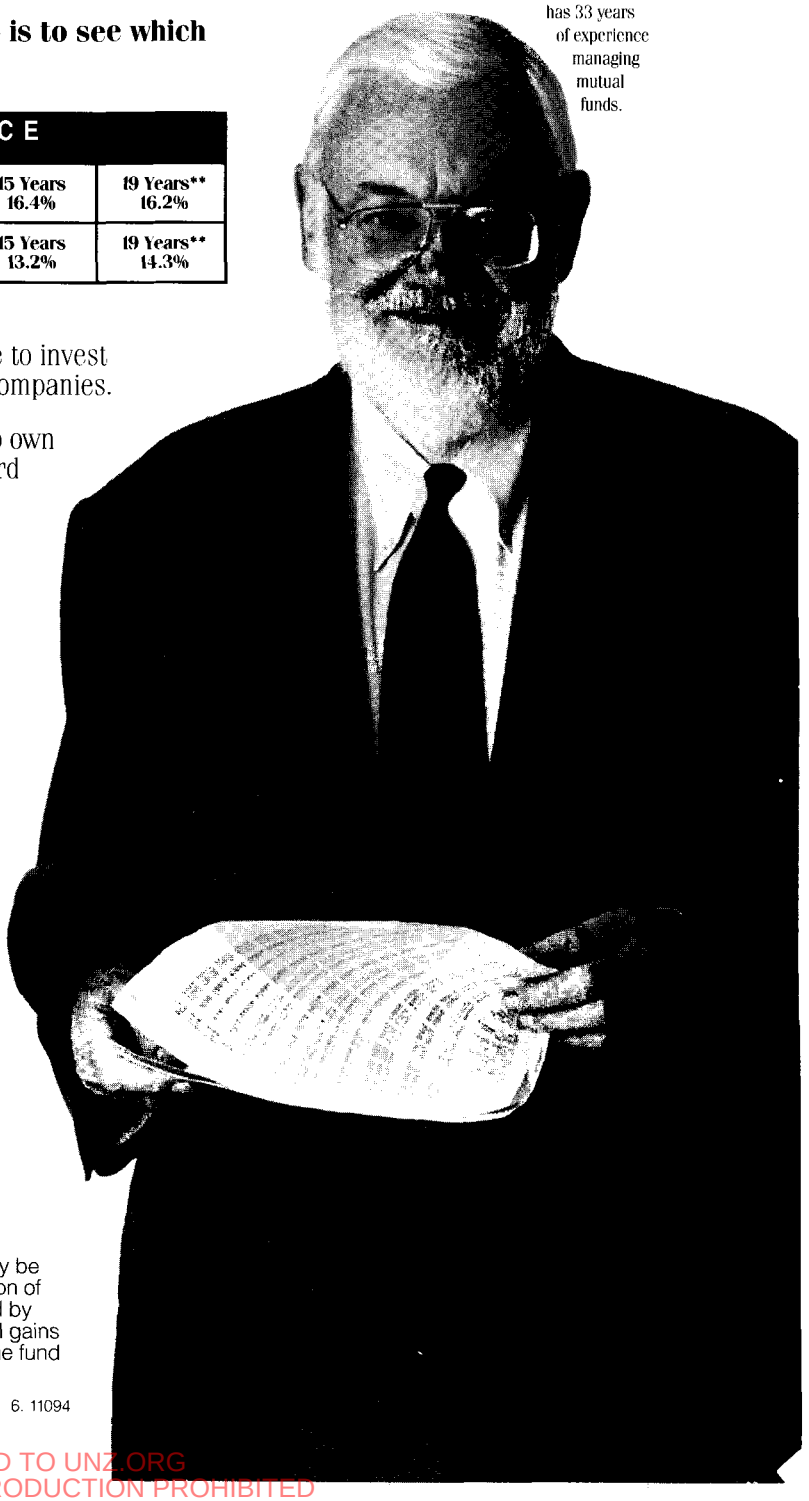

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